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THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

IN TWENTY-FOUR VOLUMES

LIMITED EDITION

LIMITED, FOR SALE IN AMERICA, TO ONE THOUSAND NUMBERED AND REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 246

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T[illegible] WORKS OF

T[illegible] PHILE

G[illegible] IER

TRANSLA[illegible]

PROFESSO[illegible]

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THE MAGIC HAT

Wife an Introduction [illegible]

NEW YORK [illegible]

by GEORGE D. SPRO[illegible]

DON JUAN IN HADES

A photogravure from a painting by J. [illegible]

In the stern a man of stone, a wan phantom, with stiff, sculptural gesture, holds the tiller; Doña Elvira endeavours to bring back the lover's smile to the lips of the disdainful husband, and the pallid women who have loved him, outraged, abandoned, betrayed, trampled under foot like withered blooms, unveil the ever-bleeding wound in their hearts. — Page 71.

GEORGE D SPROUL.

THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

VOLUME TWENTY-THREE

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRAST
Department of French, Harvard University

ART AND CRITICISM

THE MAGIC HAT

With an Introduction by the Editor

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Introduction

Art and Criticism

Introduction

THE various articles contained in this volume are all, save the last, linked together by what remained to the end the dominant thought in Gautier's mind: the love and worship of beauty. Each series, for there are series, has its own characteristics. The criticism on Baudelaire and the two articles on "The Excellence of Poetry," and "The Utility of Poetry," are marked by the profound conviction of the superiority of verse over every other form; the articles on Hugo breathe all the determined enthusiasm of a Romanticist, and the persuasion that the leader of the school had said no more than the truth when he affirmed that the drama, as constituted by him, was the final, the definitive form of literature in modern times; the chapters on Greece exhibit the overpowering sense of the very perfection of beauty, attained by a race wholly different from the French, by methods quite opposed to those of the

Gothic artists of the Middle Ages, and by the application of principles entirely different from those upon which the Romanticists themselves had worked and were still working.

It would scarcely be possible to find, in all the voluminous writings of Gautier, a stronger proof of the fact that he was first and foremost an artist, and only afterwards the adherent of a school. Greek architecture is the very incarnation of the highest and purest classicism; it has nothing of the upward-springing, multitudinous conception of beauty which is distinctive of Gothic art, the art which the Romanticists, under the leadership of Chateaubriand first and Hugo next, had restored to the place it had long since so unjustly lost. But whether the classical architecture of Greece was or was not like unto the work of the mediæval architects mattered little to Gautier, once he beheld the Parthenon, the Propylæa, the Temple of Nike Apteros, and the Erechtheium. He at once owned the spell of the "miracle," as Renan has so well termed it, and his passionate feeling for the beautiful found as complete satisfaction in the masterpieces of Greek art as in any other form.

It may seem to many readers, to most readers, of

these volumes that not only is there nothing strange in this, but that it is quite reasonable. The latter part of the proposition is entirely true; the genuine artist, the man whose taste is really cultured, admires equally the great works of the one and the other school, but at the time when Gautier wrote, the bitter struggle between the two doctrines had not wholly died away. Romanticism, as a living and effective force in literature and art, was being displaced by Realism, and the names of Balzac and Flaubert were attracting the attention that had formerly, and not so long ago, been concentrated almost exclusively upon the champions and representatives of the brilliant company of idealists. Gautier, besides, had been deeply imbued with the principles of Romanticism, and had been one of the most earnest and enthusiastic opponents of the Classical school, though it must be owned that there was little, if anything, in common between the real classical work of antiquity and the wretched pseudo-classicism against which the youth of 1830 revolted. None the less, Gautier seems never to have felt for the really classical work of French writers and artists anything approaching the admiration he bestowed freely upon his collaborators in the new movement or which he so

gladly accords to the monuments on the Acropolis. Of the great writers of the golden age of classical literature in France, it is Corneille and Molière alone that he really enjoys and really admires; and even in Corneille's work, the more purely classical plays are disregarded by him, and the "Cid," "Don Sancho of Aragon," and one or two others are quoted by him and admired, while the noblest play of all, "Polyeucte," is not mentioned at all. As for Racine, he has not studied him with interest or deep feeling, and the wondrous beauty of his work is apparently unappreciated by him. This is not in the least surprising. There is no connection between the purely emotional, not to say sensational drama of Victor Hugo and his followers, and the stately, lofty, spiritual beauty of Racine's greatest tragedies.

It must be borne in mind, in reading the accounts of the Hugo dramas in this volume, that the early impression made upon Gautier by "Hernani" was of the deepest. The first performance of that play, as the reader will remember, was the great epoch of his life. He dated everything back to it, and the last words he penned bore upon this subject. To him Hugo was the sov'ran poet and master, whose glory none could

equal, and to whom France owed a drama fully equal to Shakespeare's. How utterly mistaken Gautier was in this estimate, it has not taken many years to prove, and, indeed, he himself had the painful opportunity of witnessing the reaction against the author of "Marion Delorme."

There are two striking instances, in this very volume, of the effect this intense admiration for Hugo had upon Gautier in the way of blinding him, who was usually so clear-sighted, to the weakness of the Romanticist drama in general, and Hugo's plays in particular. As he tells us himself, the play entitled "The King's Sport" ("Le Roi s'amuse") failed when it was first performed; yet he does not hesitate to declare that "this same 'The King's Sport,' so outrageously hissed, is Hugo's best play." It is nothing of the kind, and it must surely have been in a fit of irritation against the public that Gautier allowed himself to make such a startling assertion. He had been engaged, he was then engaged in educating that public to an understanding and an appreciation of art, and it was exasperating to him to see any one work of Hugo disdained, flouted, or scouted. Yet this time the public was right, and Gautier was wrong, as was again the case when "The

Burgraves" was brought out with much flourish of trumpets, only to fall dead as a door-nail — and most deservedly.

This conclusion may not commend itself to the reader of Gautier's admirable, picturesque, and, on the whole, correct appreciation of the "trilogy." Yet it is the only conclusion possible *when one sees the play performed.* "The Burgraves," when read, strikes one as containing many superb passages and very exciting situations. That in which, for instance, the old mendicant, who is none else than the Emperor, is ushered in, amid the blare of trumpets and the resonant clash of spears, must surely be, thinks the reader, immensely impressive; and still more awe-inspiring and thrilling must be the one in which, after Hatto's insults to Otbert, and the challenge contemptuously thrown out by the former, the beggar suddenly steps forward, declares himself the champion of the young archer, and, in reply to the taunt of the burgrave, exclaims: "I am the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and here is the cross of Charlemagne!" Surely this must move every one and fill every heart with tremendous sense of tragedy. Well, as a matter of fact, it does the very opposite; it urges to laughter, for anything more

utterly disproportionate than the claim of the beggar and his appearance it is impossible to imagine. And be it remembered that this effect, and the unending sense of weariness that never leaves the spectator, was that produced upon audiences eagerly desirous of rapturously applauding the work, and that the play itself was performed by the first actors in the world, the company of the Théâtre-Français, on the occasion of the Victor Hugo centenary in February of this year 1902. Everything had been done that could be done to make the play a success, yet it proved dismally dull, and though people politely concealed their yawns, they yawned none the less. The verdict of the spectators of 1843, who might be charged with prejudice against the Romanticist drama, of which they had had a surfeit, was amply confirmed by the verdict of the splendid houses assembled to celebrate the fame of the greatest of modern French poets.

It is a peculiarity of Hugo's plays that when they do charm, as is unquestionably the case with "Hernani" even now, and, to a less degree, with "Ruy Blas," the result is largely due to the beauty of the verse. The moment he leaves verse for prose, much of the magic, nearly all the magic vanishes, and

there is left to the spectator but a melodrama, more or less wildly extravagant and forced. Such is, unquestionably, "The King's Sport," absolutely revolting in its main idea; such is "Angelo," which, notwithstanding the praise Gautier lavishes upon it, is so unreal, and so excessive in its mysteriousness and striving after terror that it bores quickly. Such to a very much less degree, is "Lucrezia Borgia," in which there are really thrilling and powerful scenes.

It is curious to notice that so intent were the author and his admirers upon the effect of "local colour" and the production of startling contrast that they one and all failed to see the inherent weakness of the plots and the characters they grew so enthusiastic over. "Ruy Blas" is a good example of this, and it may be quoted all the more readily as, with "Hernani," it is the only play of Hugo's that has in any measure remained in the regular repertory. Ruy Blas, so glowingly painted by Hugo and so superbly brought out by Gautier, is, when all is said and done, nothing more than a "loafer," who indulges in poetic dreams and ambitious fancies, but meanwhile does not scruple to stoop pretty low ere he is taken up and made a lackey by the exceedingly conventional melodrama villain, Don Salluste.

The more the play proceeds, and the higher and the more powerful does Ruy Blas become under his new name Don Cæsar de Bazan, the plainer it is that this wonderful genius is an absolute fool, incapable of seeing his opportunities and consequently of utilising them, and wholly incapable of perceiving that he has the whip-hand of the "tiger." But, of course, one must not expect character study or character drawing from a Romanticist, and least of all from Victor Hugo. The drama, as he understood it, did not consist in a real study of human nature, but in the presentation of striking scenes and a mingling of the grave and the gay.

This point must be borne in mind in order to understand and appreciate Gautier's laudatory accounts. Victor Hugo and his school had determined to create and introduce upon the French stage a new form, to which they gave the name of "drame." Hugo insisted that this form, which was, and was to remain, the definitive form in literature, was neither tragedy nor comedy, but the actual representation of life concentrated for the benefit of the spectator. It was the outcome of all previous strivings after the ideal dramatic form, which it realised. It was to present at once the

loftiest and the most familiar views of life; it was to mingle tears and laughter; to be varied, supple, in a word, life itself. The name "drame" was selected in order to differentiate this form from the consecrated dramatic forms that then reigned in literature, and it is in this restricted sense that the word "drama" almost invariably recurs in the articles that follow.

It does not follow, because Gautier was in error as to the real value of these plays, and mistaken in his belief that they were destined to endure, that his account of them, his criticism on them is valueless. Far from it; for his articles enable the present-day reader to form a just conception of the genuine enthusiasm excited in a highly cultured mind by works that now pall upon the taste. It is an interesting study to trace this change in public taste and to discover the reasons therefor, but it is a study too large for the bounds of an Introduction.

On the other hand, Gautier shows his great skill as a critic when he analyses the reasons for the popularity of Hoffmann in France, and yet more in his exceedingly valuable and most fascinating review of Baudelaire's "Flowers of Evil." This latter piece of work is undoubtedly one of the best things he has ever done,

and is of the utmost value in enabling the reader to get at the heart of Gautier's poetic doctrine. While speaking of Baudelaire and showing what the latter believed, he is also setting forth his own creed and defending his own preferences. This aspect will be studied in the Introduction to the next and last volume, which will comprise the celebrated "Enamels and Cameos," and other poems.

A word must be said concerning Gautier's own dramatic work. It is not very large in quantity nor very remarkable in quality. It consists of a clever *pasticcio* of the old Miracle plays, entitled "The Devil's Tear," of two or three light sketches, of which the one given here is about the best, and of a number of libretti for ballets. Gautier lacked time to produce a really good piece of dramatic work; driven as he was by the exigencies of the daily press for which he wrote, he could not bestow the care and attention upon a play which are necessary if a really good drama is to be turned out. He had the dramatic instinct, and he knew how to turn a dialogue, to work up a scene, and to paint a character, and it is the more regrettable therefore that he has not left a more important proof of his powers in this line. "The Magic Hat" is, of

course, inspired by the lighter comedies so much in vogue in the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and which, in a modern dress, still delight the theatre-goer at the present time. It is bright, lively, spirited, and witty. Unpretentious, it fulfils its mission of amusing the spectator, and the fact that it was revived at the Odéon is proof sufficient that it had real merit.

The chapters on Greece were, like so many other chapters in Gautier's work, intended to form the beginning of a book on Greece, but the intention was never carried out, for the old reason: lack of time and the constant occurrence of new subjects interesting Gautier or the public.

Art and Criticism

ART AND CRITICISM

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

I FIRST met Baudelaire towards the middle of the year 1849, at Pimodan House (Hôtel Lauzun) where I had a quaint apartment near Fernand Boissard's, communicating with the latter's rooms by a secret stair concealed in the thickness of the wall, and which must have been haunted by the ghosts of the beauties whom Lauzun loved of yore. Among the dwellers in the house were the superb Maryx who, when still quite young, posed to Ary Scheffer for his "Mignon," and, later, to Paul Delaroche for his "Fame Distributing Wreaths;" and that other beauty, then in her fullest bloom, whom Clesinger represented in his "Woman and Serpent," a piece of statuary in which pain bears the appearance of a paroxysm of pleasure and which is imbued with an intensity of life which no sculptor had yet attained to and which will never be surpassed.

Charles Baudelaire's talent was as yet unsuspected, and he was quietly preparing himself for fame with a

tenacity of purpose that equalled his inspiration. His name, however, was already becoming known among poets and artists with a certain thrill of expectation, and the younger generation, that was succeeding to the great generation of 1830, seemed to build great hopes upon him. In the mysterious conclave in which coming reputations manifest themselves, his was looked upon as the most promising of all.

I had often heard of him, but I was not acquainted with any of his works. I was impressed by his aspect. He wore his very black hair cut quite short, and this hair of his, with its regular points on his dazzlingly white brow, formed a sort of Saracen helmet. His brown eyes had a deep, spiritual expression, and his glance was almost oppressively penetrating. His mouth, outlined by a silky mustache, had the mobile, voluptuous, ironical sinuosity of the mouths of faces painted by Leonardo da Vinci. His nose, shapely and delicate, somewhat rounded and with palpitating nostrils, seemed to be scenting faint and distant odours; a strong dimple, like the sculptor's final touch, marked the chin; his close-shaven cheeks, the bluish tone of which was made more velvety by rice-powder, contrasted with the ruddy hue of the cheek-bones. His

neck, of feminine elegance and whiteness, showed freely out of a turned-down collar and a narrow-check tie of Madras silk. His dress consisted of a coat of shiny, lustrous stuff, snuff-coloured trousers, white stockings, and patent-leather shoes; every garment scrupulously clean and neat, with a marked stamp of English simplicity, apparently intended to denote a breaking away from the artist fashion of sporting soft felt hats, velvet jackets, red jerseys, huge beards, and wild heads of hair. There was nothing new-looking or striking in his dress. Charles Baudelaire was one of those quiet dandies who have their clothes rubbed with emery paper in order to take off the Sunday and brand-new gloss so dear to Philistines and so unbearable to well-bred men. Later on, indeed, he shaved off his mustache, considering that it was a survival of picturesque *chic* which it was childish and bourgeois-like to preserve. Thus freed from all superfluous down, his face recalled that of Laurence Sterne, a resemblance increased by Baudelaire's habit of resting his forefinger against his temple when speaking, which is the attitude, as is well known, of the English humourist in the portrait prefixed to his works.

Such was the outward impression made upon me, at our first meeting, by the future author of "The Flowers of Evil."

In the "New Parisian Cameos," by Theodore de Banville, one of the dearest and most faithful friends of the poet whose death we deplore, I find the following portrait of Baudelaire in youth, before letters, as it were. I must be allowed to transcribe here these lines of prose, which are as perfect as the finest verse. They give us a little known and rapidly disappearing picture of Baudelaire, which is not to be found elsewhere.

"A portrait painted by Émile Deroy, and which is one of the few masterpieces of modern art, shows us Charles Baudelaire at twenty, at the time when, rich, happy, beloved, and already famous, he was writing his first poems, acclaimed by Paris which rules the world. It is a rare example of a really divine face, uniting in itself every chance, every power, and the most irresistible charms. The eyebrows are clean and long, with a soft broad sweep, over warm, richly-coloured Oriental lids; the eyes, long, black, profound, with a glance of unmatched fire, caressing and masterful, take in, question, and reflect every object around. The graceful, ironic nose, of firm shape, the

tip rounded, and somewhat projecting, at once makes one think of the poet's famous line: 'My soul is borne fluttering on scents as other men's souls are borne fluttering on music.' The mouth is arched and already matured by talent, but at this moment still of a rich purple fleshiness that recalls the splendour of fruit. The chin is rounded, but strongly modelled, and as powerful as Balzac's. The whole face is of a warm brown pallor, under which show the rosy hues of rich, noble blood. It is adorned with a youthful, ideal beard; the beard of a young god, and on the broad, lofty, superbly formed brow falls black, thick, beauteous hair, curled and wavy as that of Paganini, that ripples upon a neck worthy of Achilles or Antinoüs."

Although this portrait should not be taken literally, seen as it is through the double idealisation of painting and poetry, it nevertheless was true and accurate at the time. Charles Baudelaire enjoyed a season of supreme beauty and perfect bloom, as this faithful witness enables me to affirm. A poet or an artist is but rarely known under his first and most attractive aspect. It is only later that fame comes to him, when the fatigue of study, the struggle for life, and the tortures of passion have altered his original appearance. He

leaves behind him but a worn, withered mask on which pain has put bruises or wrinkles for stigmata; and it is this latest aspect, which has a beauty of its own, that is remembered. This was the case with Alfred de Musset. When quite young he looked like Phœbus Apollo, with his fair golden hair, and David d'Angers' medallion shows him to us almost with the face of a god. In Baudelaire's case, in addition to a peculiar avoidance of whatever might smack of affectation, there mingled a certain exotic savour, a distant perfume, as it were, of sunnier climes. I understood the reason of this when I was told that Baudelaire had travelled a great deal in India.

Contrary to the free and easy ways of artists, Baudelaire piqued himself on his careful observance of conventionalities, and he was so polite as to appear mannered. He weighed his words, used only the choicest expressions, and pronounced some words in a particular way, as if he wished to underline them and to give them a mysterious importance. He had italics and capital letters in the tones of his voice. Caricature, which was held in high honour at Pimodan House, was contemned by him as being art-student and coarse, but he did not refuse to indulge in paradoxes and utterness.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

In the simplest, most natural, and perfectly easy air, exactly as if he were proclaiming a commonplace on the beauty or unpleasantness of the weather, he would put forward a satanically monstrous axiom or maintain with icy coolness a mathematically extravagant theory, for he was rigorously methodical in the development of his absurdities. His wit did not show in happy hits or flashes, but he looked at everything from a personal point of view that altered lines in the same way as looking at things from far above or far below, and he perceived relations between them that were concealed from others and which struck one by their logical oddity. His gestures were slow, few, and quiet, and never wide-armed, for he had a horror of the Southerner's way of gesticulating. He also disliked volubility of speech, and English reserve was to him a proof of good taste. He may be said to have been a dandy who had strayed into Bohemia, but who while there preserved his rank, his manners, and that self-respect characteristic of a man imbued with Brummel's principles.

This, then, is how he appeared to me at our first meeting, the remembrance of which is as fresh in my mind as if it had taken place yesterday. Indeed, I could paint the scene from memory.

We were in the large drawing-room, decorated in the finest Louis XIV style, the woodwork of which is touched up with gilding of a wondrous tone, albeit tarnished, and adorned with a corbelled cornice, on which some pupil of Lesueur or Poussin, who had worked at the Hôtel Lambert, had painted in the mythological taste of the day nymphs pursued among the reeds by satyrs. On the great serancolin marble mantelpiece, with its red and white spotting, stood, by way of a clock, a gilded elephant, in trappings like those worn by the elephant Porus rides in the battle scene by Lebrun, and supporting on its back a fighting howdah, on which was placed a dial enamelled with blue figures. The arm-chairs and sofas were old, and upholstered in tapestries of faded hue representing hunting-scenes from designs by Oudry and Desportes. It was in this room that were held the meetings of the Hascheecheen Club, of which I was a member.

As I have said, Fernand Boissard was the host here. His short, curly fair hair, his red and white complexion, his gray eyes sparkling with wit and brilliancy, his red lips and pearly teeth, indicated a Rubens-like vigour and exuberance of health, and gave promise of a life that would exceed the span allotted to man. But, alas!

none of us can foresee another's fate! Boissard, who lacked not a single requisite to happiness, who had not even known the jolly wretchedness of eldest sons, died a few years ago, after having long survived himself, of a disease like that which struck down Baudelaire. Boissard was an uncommonly able fellow; he was endowed with great breadth of mind; he appreciated painting, poetry, and music with equal facility, but the dilettante in him somewhat, no doubt, injured the artist. He spent too much time in admiring, and wore himself out with enthusiasm; yet, had he been constrained by necessity's iron hand, he would certainly have made an excellent painter, as is proved by the success he won at the Salon with his "Incident during the Retreat from Russia." But, though he did not give up painting, he allowed himself to be drawn away by the other arts; he played the violin, got up quartets, studied the scores of Bach, Beethoven, Meyerbeer, and Mendelssohn, learned foreign languages, wrote criticisms, and composed lovely sonnets. He was a great voluptuary in matters of art, and no one enjoyed masterpieces with more refinement, passion, and sensuality than he did, but by dint of admiring the beautiful, he forgot to express it, and he fancied he had rendered what he had

felt so deeply. His conversation was delightful, bright, and sparkling with unexpected good things. He possessed that rare gift, the power to invent sallies and clever remarks; all manner of pleasantly quaint expressions, Italian *concetti* and Spanish *agudezas*, flashed out as he spoke, like Callot's fantastic figures indulging in graceful and comical contortions. Enamoured, like Baudelaire, of unusual sensations, even if they were perilous, he insisted on entering those "artificial heavens," for the false ecstasies of which one has to pay so dearly, and no doubt his robust and splendid constitution was injured by the abuse of hascheech.

This tribute to a friend of my youth, with whom I lived under the same roof, to a Romanticist of the brilliant days whom fame left unknown, for he prized too highly the celebrity of others to think of acquiring it for himself, is not out of place here, in an account of a mutual friend, now dead.

On the day of my meeting with Baudelaire there was present also Jean Feuchères, a sculptor of the race of the Jean Goujons, the Germain Pilons, and the Benvenuto Cellinis, whose work, so full of taste, invention, and grace, has almost completely disappeared, having been seized upon by manufacturers and trades-

men, and ascribed — and well it deserved to be — to the most illustrious artists, and thus sold at a higher price to rich collectors, who, as a matter of fact, were not swindled. Besides being an admirable sculptor, Feuchères was also a wonderful mimic, and no actor could bring out a character as he did. He invented the comic dialogues of Sergeant Bridais and Private Pitou, which have prodigiously increased in number, and even now compel irresistible laughter. Feuchères was the first to die, and of the four artists who were met at that time in the drawing-room of Pimodan House, I only am left.

On the sofa, half-reclining and leaning on a cushion, in an attitude of immobility of which she had acquired the habit through posing to artists, Maryx, wearing a white gown quaintly spotted with polka dots that resembled gouts of blood, was listening in a vague sort of a way to the paradoxes enunciated by Baudelaire, without the least expression of surprise showing upon her features of the purest Oriental type, while shifting her rings from her left to her right hand. And such hands! as perfect as her body, of which the beauty has been preserved by a cast.

By the window, the Serpent woman (it would not

do to tell her real name) had thrown on an arm-chair her black lace cape and the most fetching little green hood ever turned out by Lucy Hocquet or Mme. Baudrand, and was shaking out her beautiful red-brown hair, still wet, for she had just come from the swimming-baths; from her whole person, draped in muslin, streamed, as from a naiad, the cool scent of the bath. She encouraged the speakers to the play of wit by her glances and her smiles, and from time to time put in a word, sometimes quizzing, sometimes approving, when the tourney recommenced more briskly than ever.

Gone are those delightful leisure hours when decamerons of poets, artists, and fair women met to talk literature, art, and love, as in the days of Boccaccio. Time, death, and the stern claims of life have dispersed the groups bound by free sympathy, but the remembrance of them is still dear to those who were fortunate enough to be of them, and it is with involuntary emotion that I pen these lines.

Shortly after this first meeting Baudelaire called on me to bring me a volume of verse from two absent friends. He has himself related this visit in a literary article of which I am the subject, in terms of such respectful admiration that I dare not transcribe it. From

that day there arose between us a friendship in which Baudelaire always insisted on maintaining the attitude of a favourite disciple in the presence of a sympathetic master, although his talent was wholly his own and sprang simply from his own individuality. Never, even when we were most intimate, did he fail to be deferential to a degree that I considered excessive and which I should have cheerfully dispensed with. He testified this deference openly, and on many occasions; and the dedication of "The Flowers of Evil," which is made to me, has preserved, in its lapidary style, the absolute expression of my poet friend's devotion.

I do not lay stress on these points for the purpose of praising myself, but because they show one side, a little known one, of Baudelaire's character. This man, whom some seek to depict as of a fiendish nature, and enamoured of evil and depravation (literary evil and depravation, of course), was, on the contrary, of a most loving and admiring disposition. Now the characteristic trait of Satan is that he is incapable of love or admiration. Light hurts him, and glory is a sight so unbearable to him that he veils his eyes with his bat-like wings. But no one, even in the fervent days of Romanticism, respected and adored the masters

more than Baudelaire. He was always ready to pay them the meed of incense that was their due, and without any servility as a disciple, without any fanaticism as a follower, for he was himself a master, with his own realm, his own subjects, and his own mint.

It may be desirable, after having shown two portraits of Baudelaire in the bloom of his youth and the fulness of his strength, to depict him as he appeared in the latter years of his life, ere disease had laid its hand upon him and sealed the lips that were never again to open here below. His face had become thinner, and more spiritual; his eyes seemed larger; his nose had become firmer and more prominent; his lips had closed mysteriously and seemed to contain sarcastic secrets in their corners. Tones denoting weariness and sunburn mingled with the once ruddy hues of the cheeks. The brow, slightly bald, had gained in grandeur and in solidity, as it were, and might have been carved out of some peculiarly hard marble. His hair, fine, silky, long, and already thinner as well as almost quite white, framed in his face, at once youthful and old, and imparted to it an almost sacerdotal look.

Charles Baudelaire was born in Paris, April 21, 1821, in the Rue Hautefeuille, in one of those old

houses with a turret at the corner, which our ædiles, too fond of straight lines and broad streets, have no doubt swept away. He was the son of Baudelaire, formerly the friend of Condorcet and Cabanis, a very distinguished and very well-read man, who had preserved the fine manners of the eighteenth century, which the pretentiously rough manners of the Republican era did not do away with as completely as is supposed. This trait persisted in the poet, whose manners remained always extremely urbane. Baudelaire does not appear to have been a phenomenal boy or to have won many prizes at the end of his school years. He found it rather difficult, indeed, to get through his examinations, and obtained his degree almost by a favour. Upset, no doubt, by the unexpected questions, the clever and really well prepared lad seemed to be a dolt. I have not the least intention of putting forward this apparent stupidity as a mark of talent; a lad may win the highest prize and yet be very clever; it merely emphasizes the fact that it is unsafe to bank upon academic tests. While the schoolboy may be absent-minded or lazy, or taken up by other matters, rather, the real character of the man is slowly forming, unknown to parents and teachers.

M. Baudelaire, the father, died, and his widow, Charles's mother, married General Aupick, who later became ambassador at Constantinople. Before long dissensions arose in the family on account of the precocious literary vocation manifested by young Baudelaire. The fears experienced by parents when the fatal gift of poesy manifests itself in a son, are, alas! but too well-founded, and it is wrong, in my opinion, for writers of biographies to reproach fathers and mothers with lack of intelligence and with taking commonplace views of life. They are quite right, are the parents. For apart from pecuniary troubles, how sad, precarious, and wretched a life is that of the man who of his own free will enters upon the Way of Sorrows called a literary life! From the moment he does so he may look upon himself as cut off from his fellowmen; he ceases to act, to live; he becomes a spectator of life. Every sensation he experiences has to be analysed by him; involuntarily he separates his two selves, and when he lacks any other subject takes to spying upon himself. If he has no corpse at hand, he stretches himself out on the black marble table, and, by a prodigy of frequent occurrence in literature, drives the dissecting knife into his own heart.

Then what endless, obstinate struggles with ideas, difficult to grasp as Proteus, assuming every possible form to avoid being caught, and yielding up their meaning only when constrained to exhibit themselves under their true aspect! And even when an idea has been seized and is held panting and breathless under one's knee, it has to be raised up again, clothed, indued with the robe of style, so difficult to weave, to dye, to arrange in graceful or in majestic folds. When this work is of long duration, the nerves become strung, the brain overheated, sensitiveness becomes over acute, and neurosis supervenes, attended by its train of mysterious uneasiness, insomnia, and hallucination, undefinable pains, morbid fancies, unreasoning enthusiasm, and motiveless antipathy, mad bursts of energy and utter prostration, thirst for stimulants and distaste for any healthy food. I am not exaggerating in any degree; more than one recent death can testify to that. And I have in mind, too, only poets of talent, who had gained fame and who, at least, died in the enjoyment of a realised ideal. What would it be were I to descend into the limbo where moan, in the company of babes, still-born vocations, abortive attempts, larvæ of ideas that won neither wings nor shapes? Desire is not

power, and love is not possession. Faith is not sufficient; one must have the gift. In literature as in theology, works are useless if grace be wanting.

Although parents cannot even suspect the existence of this hell of wretchedness, — for, to know it properly, one must have descended its winding circles, not led by a Vergil or a Dante, but by a Lousteau, a Lucien de Rubempré, or other newspaper man described by Balzac, — they nevertheless instinctively perceive the dangers and sorrows of a literary or artistic life, and they strive to turn from it the children they love, and for whom they desire to secure a humanly fortunate position in life.

Once only, since the earth began revolving round the sun, have a father and mother ardently desired to have a son in order that they might make a poet of him. The child was consequently given the most brilliant literary education, and through the hideous irony of fate became Chapelain, the author of "The Maid." Surely that was hard luck!

In order to divert Baudelaire from the obstinacy with which he clung to his literary ambitions, he was sent travelling a long way off. Shipped on board a vessel and recommended to the master, he traversed the Indian

Ocean, visited the islands of Mauritius, Reunion, and Madagascar, and Ceylon, possibly, as also a few places in the peninsula of the Ganges. But he never swerved from his resolve to become a literary man. All efforts to interest him in trade were futile; the sale of his own share of the venture troubled him not, nor did a deal in cattle intended to furnish the English in India with beefsteaks attract him more powerfully. All he brought back from that long voyage was a sensation of splendid, dazzling beauty that remained with him until his death. He admired the heavens in which shone constellations unknown in Europe; the magnificent, giant vegetation with its penetrating odours; the quaintly elegant pagodas; the brown figures swathed in white draperies, the exotic nature, so warm, so tremendous, so richly coloured. In his verse he often forsakes the fogs and mud of Paris to fly back to the lands of light, colour, and perfume. In some of his most sombre poems there often comes an opening through which, instead of blackened chimneys and smoky roofs, are seen the azure seas of Ind, the golden sands along which flits the graceful form of a semi-nude maid of Malabar bearing a jar upon her head. It may be taken for granted — without trespassing beyond reasonable

bounds upon the poet's private life — that it was during the course of this voyage that he acquired his love for the sable Venus, whom he ever after worshipped.

On his return from these distant wanderings, he had attained his majority. There was no longer any reason — not even a pecuniary one, for he was rich, for a time, at least — to run counter to Baudelaire's vocation. It had been strengthened by his opposition to obstacles, and it had been impossible to move him from his purpose. Settling in a small bachelor's apartment, in that same Pimodan House where I met him later, as I have related at the beginning of this article, he began the life of work, constantly interrupted and constantly resumed, of dissimilar studies and fruitful idleness, which is the life of every man of letters engaged in seeking his own line. Baudelaire soon discovered it. He observed, not on the hither, but beyond the farther bounds of Romanticism, an unexplored land, a sort of grim, rough Kamschatka, and it was on its outermost point that, as Sainte-Beuve, who understood his worth, says, he built himself a kiosk, or yourta, rather, of strange architectural design.

Several of the poems that appear in "The Flowers of Evil" were already written. Like all born poets,

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Baudelaire possessed at the very outset a manner proper to himself and had mastered a style of his own, which he made stronger and more polished later on, but without altering it. He has often been accused of having been purposely odd, of having determined to be original at any cost, and especially of being *mannered*. Before going farther it will be well to discuss this point.

There are people who are naturally mannered, in whom simplicity would be nothing else than downright affectation, a species of inverted mannerism. They would have to strive long and work hard in order to be simple. The circumvolutions of their brains are such that ideas, instead of keeping to a straight line, twist, tangle, and curl. It is the most complex, the most subtile, the most intense thoughts that first and foremost occur to them; they behold things from a peculiar point of view that alters both their appearance and the perspective. It is the strangest, the most unusual images, the most absurdly removed from the subject treated of, that chiefly strike them, and which they manage to connect with their woof and warp by mysterious threads that are at once perceived. That was the nature of Baudelaire's mind, and what critics took for work, effort, exaggeration, and paroxysms of delib-

erate purpose, was in reality the free and ready blossoming out of his individuality. His poems, with their exquisitely strange savour, enclosed within vials so marvellously chased, cost him no more trouble than badly rimed commonplaces cost other men.

Though Baudelaire professed for the great masters of the past the admiration they historically deserve, he believed they ought not to be taken for models. They had been fortunate enough to be born when the world was young, in the dawn of humanity, so to speak, when as yet nothing had been expressed, and every form, every image, every feeling still had the bloom of novelty. The great commonplaces that form the main stock of human thought were then in their first flush, and sufficed for simple geniuses addressing a people yet childish. But by dint of being repeated, these general poetic themes had become worn, like coins that have been too long in circulation and have lost their sharpness of outline; besides, life has become more complex, contains more notions and ideas, and is no longer sufficiently reproduced in artificial compositions inspired by the spirit of another age. While true innocence is charming, perversity that affects to be innocent is annoying and detestable. Now the nineteenth cen-

tury is anything but artless, and it needs, in order to express its thoughts, its dreams, and its aspirations, an idiom more complex than the so-called classic tongue. Literature, like day, has its morn, noon, eve, and night. Disregarding all vain discussions as to whether dawn is to be preferred to twilight, the poet's business is to paint the actual time of day and to use a palette provided with the colours necessary to render the hues of the hour. For has not sunset its beauty like the dawn? Are not copper reds, golden greens, turquoise tones melting into sapphire, the hues that blaze and melt into the final great conflagration, the strange, monstrous shaped clouds interpenetrated by the flash of light, that look like the ruins of a mighty aerial Babel, are not these as poetic in themselves as rosy-fingered Dawn, which, natheless, we value highly? But the Hours that precede the car of Day, on Guido Reni's ceiling, have long ago flown away.

The author of "The Flowers of Evil" loved what is inaccurately called the decadent style, which is simply art that has reached the extreme point of maturity which marks the setting of ancient civilisations. It is an ingenious, complex, learned style, full of shades and refinements of meaning, ever extending the bounds of

language, borrowing from every technical vocabulary, taking colours from every palette and notes from every keyboard; a style that endeavours to express the most inexpressible thoughts, the vaguest and most fleeting contours of form, that listens, with a view to rendering them, to the subtile confidences of neurosity, to the confessions of aging lust turning into depravity, and to the odd hallucinations of fixed ideas passing into mania. This decadent style is the final expression of the Word which is called upon to express everything, and which is worked for all it is worth. In connection with this style may be recalled the speech of the Lower Empire, that was already veined with the greenish streaking of decomposition, and the complex refinement of the Byzantine school, the ultimate form of decadent Greek art. Such, however, is the necessary, the inevitable speech of nations and civilisations when fictitious life has taken the place of natural life and developed in man wants till then unknown. It is no easy matter to write in this style, despised though it be by pedants, for it expresses novel ideas in novel forms and uses words hitherto unheard. Contrary to the classic style, it admits of the introduction of shadows, in which move confusedly the larvæ of superstition, the haggard phan-

tasms of insomnia, the terrors of night, the monstrous dreams that impotence alone stays in their realisation, the gloomy fancies at which day would stand aghast, and all that the soul has of darkest, most misshapen, and undefinably horrible in the depths of its uttermost recess.

It will be readily understood that the fourteen hundred words in Racine's vocabulary are not sufficient for an author who has undertaken to reproduce modern ideas and things in their infinite complexity and varied colouring. So Baudelaire, who was a good Latin scholar, in spite of his lack of success at his degree examinations, assuredly preferred Apuleius, Petronius, Juvenal, St. Augustine, and Tertullian, with his ebony black style, to Vergil and Cicero. He even resorted to ecclesiastical Latin, to the prose and the hymns in which rime stands for the forgotten ancient rhythm, and under the title "Franciscæ meæ Laudes," addressed "to a modest and erudite milliner," — for thus runs the dedication,— a Latin poem rimed in the ternary form, as Brizeux calls it, which is composed of three rimes following consecutively, instead of being alternated as in the Dantesque terzetta. To this curious poem is added a no less curious note, which I transcribe, for it explains and

corroborates what I have just said about the idioms of decadence: —

"Does it not strike the reader, as it strikes me, that the tongue of the latest Latin decadence — the parting sigh of a robust being already transformed and prepared for spiritual life — is singularly well fitted to express passion in the way it has been understood and felt by the modern world? Mysticity is the other pole of the magnet of which Catullus and his followers, brutal poets who were superficial merely, knew only the sensual pole. The solecisms and barbarisms of that marvellous tongue seem to me to render the carelessness of a passion that forgets all restraint and mocks at regulations. The words, taken in a new sense, reveal the charming unskilfulness of the Northern barbarian kneeling before his Roman beauty. Have not even the puns, as they flash among the pedantic stammering, a look of childhood's shy, quaint grace?"

It would not do to carry the notion too far. When Baudelaire is not engaged in expressing a yet untold side of the soul or of things, he makes use of so pure, clear, correct, and accurate a tongue that the most critical can find nothing in it to blame. This is particularly noticeable in his prose, in which he treats of matters

more generally current and less abstruse than in his verse, which is almost always extremely condensed. His philosophic and literary beliefs were the beliefs held by Edgar Allan Poe, whose works he had not yet translated, but for whom he felt singular affinity. The remarks he wrote upon the American author, in the preface to the "Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour," are equally applicable to himself: —

"He looked upon progress, the great modern idea, as no better than a trap to catch fools, and he called *improvements* in human dwellings rectangular cicatrices and abominations. He believed in the unchanging alone, in the eternal, in the self-same, and he enjoyed the cruel privilege of possessing, in a society in love with itself, that Machiavellian common-sense which goes before the wise man through the desert of history like a pillar of light."

Baudelaire abhorred philanthropists, progressists, utilitarians, humanitarians, utopists, and all those who seek to make any change in unchanging nature and in the inevitable order of society. He sought neither the suppression of hell nor that of the guillotine in the interest of sinners and assassins. He did not believe that man was born good, and he admitted original sin as an

for the sole pleasure of running c
law, without any other inducement than disc
apart from any sensuality, any profit, any cha
marked and upbraided this perverse disposition
just as he marked and upbraided it in himse
slave caught in wrong-doing; but he refrain
preaching on the subject, for he considered it d
irremediable. The short-sighted critics who l
cused Baudelaire of immorality — a convenient
abuse on the part of jealous mediocrity, for it is
well received by Pharisees — are entirely in the
No man ever professed haughtier disgust for
tude of mind and the repulsiveness of matter. H
evil as being a deviation from the mathematical a
normal; and, like the thorough gentleman he
despised it as improper, ridiculous, commonpla
particularly as being filthy. He has often been
treat hideous, repugnant, diseased subjects by tl
of horror and fascination that leads a bird under tl
of magnetism to flutter down to the serpent's evil
but many a time by a vigor-

spell and soars upward again towards the bluest realms of spirituality. He might have engraved as a motto on his seal the two words, "Spleen and Idealism," which form the title of the first part of his volume of verse. If it be urged that his bouquet is composed of strange, metallic-leaved flowers, with intoxicating perfumes, their calyxes filled with bitter tears or aqua-tofana instead of dew, his answer is that scarce any others grow in the black loam, saturated with rottenness like the soil of a graveyard, which is formed by the decrepit civilisations, in which the corpses of former ages are dissolving amid mephitic miasmata. No doubt forget-me-nots, roses, daisies, and violets are sweeter and more spring-like flowers, but they are not to be found growing in the black mud that fills in the interstices between the paving-stones in the great cities. Besides, Baudelaire, though he does appreciate the great tropical landscapes in which strangely elegant and gigantic bursts of trees suddenly bloom out dream-like, cares but little for the quieter pastoral glimpses of woodland in the vicinity of the city, and he would be the last to go into ecstasies, like Heinrich Heine's Philistines, in presence of the romantic efflorescence of the new leafage, or to be transported by the twittering of the sparrows. What he likes is to

follow man, wan, overstrung, writhing, tortured by the fictitious passions and the genuine weariness of modern days, through the sinuosities of the vast madrepore that is Paris; to watch him in his troubles, his anguish, his wretchedness, his prostration, his excitement, his nervousness, and his despair. He gazes at the nascent evil instincts, the foul habits idly crouching in their filth, as one might gaze upon knotted vipers turned up from under a dunghill. The sight, which both attracts and repels him, fills him with incurable melancholy, for he does not consider that he is any better than other men, and it pains him to see the pure vault of heaven and the chaste stars veiled by loathsome vapours.

Holding such opinions, Baudelaire, it will readily be perceived, believed art should be absolutely autonomous, and refused to admit that poetry had any end other than itself, or any mission to fulfil other than that of exciting in the reader's mind the sensation of the Beautiful, in the strictest meaning of the word. In our day, when men are anything but simple-minded, he believed it was necessary to add to that sensation a certain effect of surprise, of astonishment, of uncommonness. He banished from poetry, to the utmost of his power, eloquence, passion, and the too accurate

reproduction of truth. Just as one must not use in sculpture parts cast directly from the living model, so he insisted that before being admitted into the sphere of art every object should undergo a metamorphosis that should fit it for that subtle realm, by idealising it and removing it from trivial truth.

These principles may surprise one, when reading certain poems of his in which he seems to have deliberately set out to be horrible; but if they be carefully examined, it will be seen that the horrible is always transformed by the character and the effect of it, by a Rembrandt-like flash, by a grand stroke, like that of Velasquez, that reveals the high breeding under the foul difformity. As he mingles in his caldron all manner of fantastically strange and cabalistically venomous ingredients, Baudelaire may say, like the witches in Macbeth, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." Predetermined ugliness of this kind, therefore, is not in contradiction with the supreme aim of art, and poems such as "The Seven Old Men" and "The Little Old Women" drew from the poetic Saint John who is dreaming in the Patmos of Guernsey a remark which admirably describes the author of "The Flowers of Evil": "You have endowed the heavens of

art with a ghastly beam; you have created a new shudder." But the ardently ruddy or the coldly blue shadow that helps Baudelaire to bring out the essential, luminous touch is but the shadow of his talent, if one may thus put it. Though that talent is apparently nervous, feverish, and restless, it is really serene. He is at peace on the high summits: *pacem summa tenent.*

All the same, instead of saying what are the poet's beliefs, it would be simpler to let him speak for himself: —

"If a man will only take the trouble to examine himself, to question his own soul, to recall his childhood remembrances, he will perceive that poetry has no other end than itself; it cannot have any other, and no poem can be so great, so noble, so truly worthy of being called a poem, as that which has been written solely for the pleasure of writing a poem.

"I do not mean to imply that poetry does not ennoble manners, — I desire to be correctly understood, — or that its final result is not the elevation of man above sordid interests; that would plainly be absurd. What I say is that if the poet has sought to attain a moral end, he has lessened his poetic force, and it is not imprudent to wager that his work will be poor.

Poetry cannot assimilate itself to science or morals, under pain of death or forfeiture. Itself, not truth, is its end. The modes of demonstrating truth are different, and are to be sought for elsewhere. Truth has nothing to do with songs: the very causes that tend to make a song charming, graceful, and irresistible, would deprive truth of its authority and power. Cold, calm, and impassible, the demonstrative temper repels the gems and flowers of the Muse, and is therefore absolutely the opposite of the poetic temper.

"Pure intelligence aims at truth, taste shows us beauty, and moral sense teaches us duty. It is true that the middle one of these senses is intimately connected with the two extreme ones, and that it is distinguished from the moral sense by so slight a difference that Aristotle did not hesitate to class some of its delicate workings among the virtues. That is why what especially exasperates a man of taste when he beholds vice is the difformity, the disproportion of it. Vice is harmful to the just and the true, revolting to the intellect and the conscience. On the other hand as an outrage against harmony, as a dissonance, it hurts more specially certain poetic minds, and I do not think it is scandalous to look

upon every infraction of morality, of moral beauty, as a sort of sin against universal prosody and rhythm.

"It is this admirable, this immortal instinct for the beautiful that leads us to look upon the earth and the sights it offers us as a sort of summary of, as something corresponding to, heaven. The insatiable desire for all that is beyond and concealed by life is the most living proof of our immortality. It is at once by poetry and *through* poetry, by music and *through* music, that the soul obtains a glimpse of the splendours that lie beyond the tomb. And when an exquisite poem brings tears to our eyes, these tears do not mean excess of enjoyment; rather do they testify to irritation of melancholy, to postulation of the nerves, to the existence of a nature exiled within the imperfect, that seeks to seize at once, and even while upon this earth, upon the paradise that has been revealed to it.

"Thus, the principle of poetry is strictly and simply human aspiration to a higher beauty, and the principle manifests itself in enthusiasm, in rapture of the soul, — an enthusiasm which is wholly independent of passion, the intoxication of the heart, and of truth, the food of reason. For passion is a *natural*

thing, too natural indeed not to introduce an unpleasant, a discordant tone into the domain of pure beauty; too familiar and too violent not to scandalise the pure desires, the gracious melancholy, and the noble despair that inhabit the supernatural regions of poetry."

Although few poets have been endowed with more spontaneous originality and inspiration, Baudelaire, no doubt through disgust at the sham lyricism that pretends to believe that a tongue of fire settles upon the head of the writer who is striving hard to rime a stanza, maintained that a true writer called up, directed and modified at will the mysterious power of literary production; and I find in a very curious passage prefixed to the translation of Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem "The Raven," the following semi-ironical, semi-serious lines, in which Baudelaire formulates his own views while appearing to be simply analysing those of the American author: —

"We are told that poetics are made and modelled after poems. Here is a poet who affirms that his poem has been composed in accordance with his poetics. He certainly was possessed of greater genius and inspiration than any other man, if inspiration be taken to mean energy, intellectual enthusiasm, and the power of main-

taining one's faculties bright. But he was also fonder of work than any other man, and though a thorough eccentric, was given to repeating that originality is a thing to be learned by serving an apprenticeship to it, which does not mean that it is a thing which can be transmitted by teaching. His two great foes were chance and the incomprehensible. Did he claim to be, through strange and amusing vanity, less original than he naturally was? Did he undervalue the natural gift that was in him on purpose to make the share of the will larger? I am rather inclined to believe he did, although it must not be forgotten that ardent and swift as was his genius, he was passionately fond of analysis, combinations, and calculations. Another of his favourite axioms was that everything in a poem, as in a novel, in a sonnet, as in a tale, ought to work for the end. 'A good author is already thinking of his last line as he is penning his first.' Thanks to this admirable method, an author can begin his work at the end and go on with it when he pleases and in whatever part he pleases. The amateurs of *a fine frenzy* may perhaps revolt at such *cynical* maxims, but no one need take more than he likes. It will always be useful to show them the benefit art may derive from deliberation, and men of the world the amount of labour

required to produce that piece of luxury called poetry. After all, a little charlatanism is always allowable in genius, and indeed is not unbecoming to it. Like rouge upon the cheeks of a naturally beautiful woman, it is an additional seasoning to the mind."

The latter sentence is characteristic of the poet and reveals his peculiar love of the *artificial*. Nor did he attempt to conceal his preference; he took pleasure in the kind of composite, and at times somewhat fictitious beauty wrought out by very old or very corrupt civilisations. To illustrate this by a readily apprehended comparison, I shall say that he would have preferred to a maiden who used no other cosmetic than the water in her basin, a more mature woman who availed herself of all the resources of skilled coquetry, sitting in front of a dressing-table covered with bottles of scent, cosmetics, ivory-backed brushes, and steel pincers. The penetrating perfume of a skin steeped in aromatics, like Esther's, who was purified for six months with myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, before being presented to King Ahasuerus, exercised an intoxicating influence upon him. He by no means disliked a touch of china rose or hortensia rouge upon a blooming cheek, patches alluringly placed at the corner of the mouth or the eye, eyelids

darkened with kohl, hair dyed red and dusted with gold, a bloom of rice-powder upon the shoulders and bosom, lips and finger-tips touched up with carmine. He liked these artistic improvements upon nature, clever ways of setting off charms, piquant allurements laid on with a skilful hand to increase the grace, attraction, and character of a face. He certainly would never have written virtuous tirades against crinolines and the making-up of faces; whatever separated man, and especially woman, from the state of nature, he looked upon as a fortunate invention. So unprimitive a taste explains itself and is easily understood in a poet of the *decadence* who has written "The Flowers of Evil." Nor will any of my readers be surprised when I add that he preferred to the simple scent of the rose and the violet, benzoin, amber, and even musk, so little thought of nowadays, as well as the penetrating perfume of certain exotic flowers the heady scent of which is unsuited to our temperate climes. As regards odours, Baudelaire was endowed with a strangely subtle sensuality not often met with save among Eastern nations. He took deep delight in going through the whole series of them, and he could with reason say of himself, in the words quoted by Banville which I have reproduced when drawing the poet's portrait at the

beginning of this article: "My soul is borne fluttering on scents as other men's souls are borne fluttering on music."

He was fond also of oddly elegant, capriciously rich, insolently fanciful dresses that partook at once of the actress and the courtesan, although he himself was always rigidly correct in his dress; such excessive, out of the way, anti-natural taste, almost invariably contrary to the classical standard of beauty, was to him a token that the human will had corrected in its own fashion the forms and colours furnished by matter. He beheld a proof of grandeur where a philosopher found only a text for remonstrance. *Depravity*, that is, a breaking away from the normal type, is impossible to animals, who are helplessly directed by unchanging instinct. For the same reason, *inspired* poets, who are not conscious of their work, and cannot direct it, filled him with a species of aversion, and he desired to introduce art and work even into originality.

I am putting a good deal of metaphysics into this introduction, but then Baudelaire's nature was more subtle, complex, logical, paradoxical, and philosophical than that of poets in general. The æsthetics of his art preoccupied him greatly; he had a wealth of systems which

he endeavoured to apply, and he planned out whatever he did. In his belief, literature should be *predetermined*, and the share of the *accidental* restricted as much as possible. This did not prevent his turning to account, like the true poet he was, the fortunate chances that occur in the course of the work, and the unforeseen beauties that arise from the very subject itself, like flowerets haply mingled with the seed the sower has chosen. Every artist is more or less like Lope de Vega, who, when he set about composing his plays, locked up the rules with six keys—*con seis claves*. When carried away by the work, he forgot, consciously or unconsciously, his systems and paradoxes.

Baudelaire's reputation, which, for some years, had not extended beyond the small conclave which every budding genius draws to itself, burst out suddenly when he presented himself to the public with the nosegay of "The Flowers of Evil" in his hand; a nosegay that in no respect resembled the innocent poetic sheaves of aspirants. The attention of the law was aroused, and a number of poems so learnedly, so abstrusely immoral, so shrouded in veils and forms of art that they required, to be understood by readers, a very high degree of literary culture, had to be withdrawn from the volume

and replaced by others less dangerously eccentric. Usually books of poems do not attract much attention; they are brought out, vegetate, and die in silence, for two or three poets at most suffice for our intellectual food. But light and talk burst out at once upon Baudelaire, and when the scandal passed away it was seen that he had produced that very rare thing, an original piece of work possessing a savour all its own. No writer, especially no poet, can ask for greater good-fortune than to impart to taste a hitherto unknown sensation.

"The Flowers of Evil" was a happy title, and happy titles are far more difficult to hit upon than is believed. It summed up in brief, poetic fashion the general idea of the book and indicated its tendency. Although quite plainly Romanticist in its intention and its execution, Baudelaire cannot be connected by any very visible bond with any one of the great masters of the school. His verse, with its refined and erudite structure, its occasionally too great conciseness, clothing objects as with a suit of armour rather than with a garment, appears at the first reading to be difficult and obscure. This is due not to any fault on the part of the author, but to the very novelty of the topics he

treats of, which had not before been rendered by literary means. In order to succeed in doing so, the poet was compelled to compose a speech, a rhythm, and a palette for himself. He could not, however, prevent the reader feeling a shock of surprise when perusing verse so different from all that had until then appeared. In order to paint the corruption which he abhors, he managed to find the morbidly rich hues of more or less advanced decomposition, pearly, shelly tones such as shimmer on stagnant waters, the bloom of consumption, the ghastly whiteness of anæmia, the gall yellow of overflowing bile, the leaden grays of plague mists, poisonous, metallic greens that stink of arseniate of copper, sooty blacks washed by the rain down plastered walls, bitumens baked and browned in the frying-pans of hell and so admirably adapted to form a background to livid, spectral heads, in a word, a whole scale of exacerbated colours carried out to the most intense pitch, that correspond to autumn, to sunset, to the extreme maturity of fruits, to the dying hour of civilisations.

The volume opens with a poem addressed "To the Reader," whom the poet, contrary to custom, does not attempt to win over, but to whom he speaks the harshest of truths, accusing him, in spite of his hypocrisy, of

having all the vices he blames in other men, and of bearing in his heart the great modern monster, Weariness, which with bourgeois cowardice, idiotically dreams of Roman ferocity and debauchery, like the bureaucratic Nero, the shop-keeping Heliogabalus it is. Another poem, of the greatest beauty, entitled, no doubt with ironical antithesis, "Benediction," depicts the coming into the world of the poet, who is an object of aversion to his mother, ashamed of the fruit of her womb, and his persecution by stupidity, envy, and sarcasm, his falling a prey to a Delilah, who rejoices at handing him over to the Philistines naked, disarmed, shaven, after having exhausted in his favour all the refinements of ferocious coquetry, and at last, after insult, wretchedness, and torture, and having been tried in the crucible of suffering, winning eternal glory, and the crown of light destined to martyrs, whether it be for the truth or for beauty that they have died.

A short poem, entitled "Sunshine," follows this one, and contains a sort of tacit justification of the poet's mad wanderings. A bright beam of sunshine lights up the foul city; the author has gone forth and traverses, "like a poet catching verses by calling to them as to birds," to use Mathurin Regnier's picturesque expres-

sion, loathsome squares, lanes in which the closed blinds of the windows conceal yet betray hidden lusts, the black, damp, filthy maze of blank-walled, leprous houses at some window of which, here and there, the light shines upon a pot of flowers or a girl's head. For is not the poet like sunshine that goes in by itself wherever it pleases, into hospitals and into palaces, into hovels and into churches, ever pure, ever brilliant, ever divine, illumining with its golden light the dead body and the rose indifferently?

In "Elevation" we see the poet soaring in the very vault of heaven, beyond the starry spheres, in the luminous ether, on the very confines of our universe which has vanished like a cloudlet in the depths of the infinite, drinking in deeply the healthy rarefied air free from the foul odours of earth and perfumed by the breath of angels. For it must not be forgotten that Baudelaire, though he has often been accused of materialism — a reproach fools never fail to address to men of talent — is on the contrary endowed to an eminent degree with the gift of *spirituality*, as Swedenborg would say. He also possesses the gift of *correspondence*, if I may still use these mystical terms; that is, he is able to discover through a secret intuition relations invisible

to other people, and thus to connect by unexpected analogies, which a *seer* alone can note, objects apparently utterly removed from and most opposed to each other. Every true poet is endowed with this quality to a greater or less degree, for it is the very essence of his art.

No doubt, in this book devoted to the representation of modern depravity and perversity, Baudelaire has placed repugnant pictures, in which vice laid bare wallows in all the hideousness of its shame; but the poet, filled with utter disgust, with indignant contempt, and with a return to the ideal that is often lacking in satirists, stigmatises and brands with a red-hot iron the unhealthy flesh, plastered over with unguents and powder. Nowhere does the thirst for pure, untainted air, for immaculate whiteness, for spotless azure, for inaccessible light manifest itself more ardently than in those poems which have been charged with immorality; as if the flagellation of vice and vice itself were one and the same thing, or a man were a poisoner because he had described the toxic pharmaceutics of the Borgias. The method is not a new one, but it never fails to succeed, and there are people who affect to believe that when reading "The Flowers of Evil" one must neces-

sarily wear a glass mask, such as that worn by Exili when engaged in the compounding of his famous inheritance powder. I have read Baudelaire's poems very often, but I have never yet been struck dead by them, nor have my features been convulsed, and my body covered with black spots, as if I had supped with La Vanozza in one of the Pope's vineyards. All that sort of nonsense, which is unfortunately harmful, for all fools enthusiastically believe it, make an artist worthy of the name shrug his shoulders with surprise when he is told that blue is moral and scarlet indecent. It is very much as if one were to say that the potato is virtuous and henbane criminal.

In a delightful poem on perfumes these are divided into classes that awaken diverse ideas, sensations, and remembrances. Some are as cool as a child's flesh, green as the meads in spring, recalling the rosy hues of early morn, and laden with innocent thoughts. Others, like musk, benzoin, amber, nard, and incense, are proud, triumphal, worldly, and incline to coquetry, love, luxury, banquets, and splendour. Transposed into the realm of colour, they would represent purple and gold.

The poet often recurs to this idea of the meaning of perfumes. By the side of a dusky beauty, a Cape

maiden or an Indian bayadere astray in Paris, who seems to have been charged to lull his splenetic nostalgia, he speaks of the mingled scent of "musk and havana" that bears away his soul to the shores beloved of the sun, where the palm leaves spread fan-like in the warm blue air, and the masts of ships swing to the harmonious roll of the sea, while the silent slaves endeavour to rouse their young master from his languid melancholy. Farther on, wondering what will become of his work, he compares it to an old flagon, corked up, forgotten among the cobwebs, at the back of some press, in a deserted house. From the open press issue with the odour of the past the faint scents of dresses, laces, and powder-boxes that bring up remembrances of vanished loves and departed elegance. If by chance the viscous, rancid flagon be uncorked, there arises from it a bitter perfume of sal ammoniac and Marseilles vinegar, the powerful antidote to modern pestilence. This haunting sense of aromas reappears in many a place, shrouding beings and things in a tenuous cloud. I know not many poets who seek to obtain the same effect; they are generally content to introduce light, colour, and music into their verse, but they seldom let fall into it the one drop of delicate essence with which

Baudelaire's muse never fails to moisten the sponge in her scent-bottle or the cambric of her handkerchief.

As I am on the subject of the poet's private tastes and little hobbies, let me add that he adored cats, which, like himself, are very fond of perfumes and in whom the odour of valerian induces a sort of epileptic ecstasy. He was very fond of these delightful, quiet, mysterious, gentle animals, with their electric shivers, whose favourite attitude is the prone pose of the sphinxes, which seem to have passed their secrets on to them. They prowl with velvet paw through the house, like the *genius loci*, or come to sit down on the table by the writer, keeping his thought company, and gazing at him out of the depths of their eyes, dusted with gold, with intelligent tenderness and magical penetration. It seems as though cats divine the thought that is passing from the brain to the pen, and that as they stretch out a paw they are trying to seize it on its way. They delight in silence, orderliness, and peace, and no place suits them so well as a literary man's study. They wait with wondrous patience until his task be done, while they accompany his labour with their guttural, rhythmic purring. Now and then they smooth with their tongue some ruffled spot on their

fur, for they are cleanly, careful of themselves, coquettish, and cannot bear anything amiss with their appearance, but they do all this in a calm, discreet way, as if afraid of disturbing or being in the way. Their caresses are tender, delicate, silent, *feminine*, and have nothing in common with the noisy, boisterous petulance of dogs, on whom, nevertheless, the masses have bestowed all their sympathy.

These many merits were duly appreciated by Baudelaire, as was right and proper, and he more than once dedicated to cats beautiful poems — there are three in "The Flowers of Evil" — in which he sings of their moral and physical qualities, and he very often brings them in as characteristic accessories in his compositions. Cats are as numerous in Baudelaire's verse as dogs are in Paolo Veronese's paintings, and are equivalent to a signature. I ought to add that there is to these pretty creatures, so well behaved during the daytime, a nocturnal side, mysterious and cabalistic which had much attraction for the poet. A cat, with its phosphorescent eyes that stand it in the stead of lanterns, and sparks flashing from its back, moves fearlessly through the darkness, where it meets wandering ghosts, witches, alchemists, necromancers, resur-

rectionists, lovers, thieves, murderers, gray-coated patrols, and all the obscure larvæ that emerge and work by night only. It seems to know more than the latest special from the sabbath, and does not hesitate to rub up against Mephistopheles' lame leg. Its serenades under the balconies of the females of its kind, its amours on the roof to the accompaniment of yells like those of a child being murdered, impart to it a passably devilish look that, up to a certain point, justifies the repugnance felt for it by practical, daylight minds, for whom the mysteries of Erebus have no attraction. But a Doctor Faust will always love to have a cat for a companion in his study filled with tomes and alchemic apparatus. Baudelaire himself was a voluptuous, wheedling cat, with velvety manners, mysterious gait, strong and supple, casting on men and things a glance filled with a troublous, free insistent light, difficult to retain, but wholly free from perfidiousness, and faithfully attached to those to whom he had once given his independent sympathy.

Diverse female figures show in Baudelaire's poems, some veiled, others semi-nude, but to none can a name be given. They are types rather than persons; they represent the *eternal woman*, and the love the poet

expresses for them is *abstract love*, and not *concrete love*, for we have seen that his theory did not admit individual passion, which he looked upon as too crude, familiar, and violent. Among these women, some are symbolical of unconscious and almost bestial prostitution, with faces heavy with rouge and powder, eyes lined thick with kohl, lips painted red and resembling bleeding wounds, helmets of false hair, and gems that glitter hard and cold. Others, more coldly, cleverly, perversely corrupt, Marchionesses de Marteuil living in the nineteenth century, transpose vice from the body to the soul. They are haughty, icy proud, bitter, and find pleasure only in satisfied wickedness, insatiable as sterility itself, gloomy as weariness, filled with hysterical, mad fancies, and lacking, like the Fiend himself, the power to love. Endowed with terrific, almost spectral beauty, which is not flushed with the red glow of life, they go on to their appointed end, pale, unfeeling, superbly disgusted, trampling upon hearts that they crush with their narrow high heels. It is when he comes away from such loves, that are like hatreds, from such pleasures that are more deadly than combats, that the poet turns again to his dusky idol with the exotic odour, with the wildly quaint adornments, supple and wheedling like the black panther

of Java, who rests him and compensates to him for the harm done him by these wicked sharp-clawed Parisian cats, that have toyed with his heart as with a mouse.

But it is upon none of these plaster, marble, or ebony creatures that he bestows his soul. Above the darksome mass of leprous houses, above the foul labyrinth where meander the spectres of pleasure, above the foul swarming wretchedness, ugliness, and perversity, far, far away up in the unchanging heavens floats the beloved phantom of his Beatrice, the ideal ever sought, never attained; highest, divine beauty incarnated in the form of a woman, etherealised, spiritualised, made of light, flame, and perfume; a vapour, a dream, a reflection of the aromatical, seraphic world, like Edgar Allan Poe's Ligeias, Morellas, Unas, and Eleonoras, and that amazing creation, Balzac's Séraphita-Séraphitus. Out of the depths of his falls, his errors and his despair, it is to this celestial image that he holds out his hands as to Our Lady of Succour, with cries, tears, and utter self-contempt. In hours of amorous melancholy, it is with her he fain would flee and hide his perfect felicity in some nook, mysteriously fairy-like or ideally comfortable, — a Gainsborough cottage, an interior of Gerard

Dow's, or, better still, a fretted marble palace in Benares or Hyderabad. He never has any other companion in his dreams. Are we to see in this Beatrice, this Laura, never named, a real maiden or young married woman who, while she remained on this earth, was passionately and religiously loved by the poet? It would be a romantic supposition, but it was not my fortune to be admitted sufficiently into his heart's inner life to be in a position to answer the question. In the course of his purely metaphysical conversations, Baudelaire spoke much of his ideas, very little of his feelings, and never of his actions. And as regarded his loves, he had sealed his delicate, disdainful lips with a cameo bearing the image of Harpocrates. It would be safest to consider that ideal love as merely an uplifting of the soul, the striving of an unsatisfied heart, the ever recurring longing of the imperfect that aspires to the absolute.

At the end of "The Flowers of Evil" come a number of poems on "Wine" and the different forms of intoxication it produces, according to the kind of brain on which it acts. It is unnecessary to say that these are not bacchanalian songs in which the fruit of the vine is honoured, or anything resembling them. They are terrible and hideous descriptions of drunkenness,

but unprovided with a Hogarthian moral. The painting needs no inscription, and one shudders at "The Workingman's Drink." "The Litanies of Satan," the god of evil and the prince of this world, are a cold piece of irony of the kind the poet indulges in, and which it would be a mistake to consider impious. Impiety did not form part of Baudelaire's nature, for he believed in a higher law established by God from all time, the least violation of which is punished in the severest way, not in this world only, but also in the next. It is certainly without taking any pleasure in the task that he has depicted vice and exhibited Satan and all his pomp. He is even rather troubled by the devil as the tempter, and sees him at work everywhere, as if man's native perversity were not sufficient to drive him to sin, infamy, and crime. Sin, with Baudelaire, is invariably followed by remorse, anguish, and disgust, and entails its own self-punishment, which is the worst punishment of all. But enough on this point; it is criticism, and not theology with which I have to do.

I must draw attention to some of the most remarkable poems in "The Flowers of Evil," especially the one called "Don Juan in Hades." It is a tragically grand picture, painted with a sober masterliness of

colouring upon the sombre flaming background of the infernal regions.

The boat of the dead glides over the black waters, bearing Don Juan and his train of outraged women and insulted men. The beggar whom he sought to have deny the existence of God, an athletic vagrant, as proud in his rags as any Antisthenes, handles the oars in the room of Charon. In the stern a man of stone, a wan phantom, with stiff, sculptural gesture, holds the tiller; old Don Luis points to his white hair scorned by his hypocritically impious son; Sganarelle claims payment of his wages from his master, now for ever insolvent. Doña Elvira endeavours to bring back the lover's smile to the lips of the disdainful husband, and the pallid women who have loved him, outraged, abandoned, betrayed, trampled under foot like withered blooms, unveil the ever bleeding wound in their hearts. Amid the concert of tears, wailings, and curses, Don Juan remains impassible; he has done what he willed to do; Heaven, hell, and the world may think of him what they please, his pride knows not remorse; lightning may blast him, but it cannot force him to repent.

The serene melancholy, the luminous peace, and the slumbrousness of the poem entitled "The Former

Life," form a pleasant contrast to the sombre descriptions of monstrous modern Paris, and testify to the fact that by the side of the blacks, bitumens, browns, umbers, and siennas on the artist's palette, there is a whole range of cool, light, transparent, delicately rosy, ideally blue hues like those in the distances in Paradise Breughel's pictures, which are fitted to reproduce Elysian landscapes and the mirages of dreams.

The feeling for the *artificial* should be mentioned as characteristic of the poet. By this must be understood a creation due wholly to art and whence nature is excluded. In an article which I wrote while Baudelaire was alive, I drew attention to this curious tendency, of which the poem called "A Parisian Dream" is a striking instance. I quote the passage in which I endeavoured to reproduce that splendid, sombre nightmare, worthy of Martin's mezzotints: "Imagine a landscape outside the realm of nature, or, rather, a prospect composed of metal, marble, and water, and from which vegetation is banished as out of place. Everything is rigid, burnished, glaring under a sunless, moonless, starless sky. From amid the eternal silence rise, illumined by their own light, palaces, colonnades, towers, stairs, fountains, whence ponderous cascades

fall like crystal curtains. The blue waters are set, like steel mirrors of antiquity, within quays and basins of burnished gold, or flow noiselessly under bridges of gems. The flow is clasped by the crystallised ray, and the porphyry flagstones of the terraces reflect objects as if they were mirrors. Were the Queen of Sheba to tread them, she would lift up her gown for fear of wetting her feet, so shiny is the surface. The style of this poem gleams like polished black marble."

Is it not strangely fanciful, this composition made up of rigid elements among which nothing lives, breathes, or moves, in which no blade of grass, no leaf, no flower, breaks the implacable symmetry of fictitious forms invented by art? Does not one seem to be in an untouched Palmyra or Palenque which has remained intact and erect in some dead planet from which the atmosphere has vanished?

Unquestionably such fancies are fantastic, anti-natural, bordering on hallucination, and they betray a secret desire for impossible novelty, but for my part I prefer them to the sickly simplicity of so-called poems that embroider with old faded wools upon the canvas of worn-out commonplaces, trite, trivial, and idiotically sentimental patterns; wreaths of big roses, cabbage-

green foliage, and doves billing and cooing. I am quite ready at times to have what is rare at the cost of its being shocking, fantastic, and exaggerated. Barbarism is superior to platitude, to my thinking, and Baudelaire has this advantage, so far as I am concerned: he may be bad, but he is never vulgar; his faults are as original as his qualities, and even when he is unpleasant, it is because he has willed to be so, in accordance with long matured æsthetics and reasoning.

I must bring to a close this already somewhat lengthy analysis, though I have cut it down a good deal, with a few words on the poem entitled "The Little Old Women," which startled Victor Hugo. As the poet walks the Paris streets, he sees little old women pass by with humble and dejected mien, and he follows them just as if they were lovely women, reading, in the old, worn, faded shawl, rubbed, darned over and over again, meanly covering the thin shoulders, in the bit of yellowed, frumped lace, in the ring, — a souvenir which the pawn-shop must not have, and which is ready to slip off the slender finger of the wan hand, — a whole past of happiness and luxury, of love and devotion, it may be, a remnant of beauty still perceptible under the wretchedness of poverty and the devastation

of age. He breathes new life into these tottering spectres, straightens them up, puts the flesh of youth upon their gaunt skeletons, and reawakens within their poor unhappy hearts the illusions of bygone days. Most ridiculous, yet most touching are these graveyard Venuses and almshouse Ninon de Lenclos as they sadly flit by, at the master's command, like spectres surprised by the dawn.

Baudelaire rightly considered that metre, disdained by all who lack feeling for form, — and there are plenty such nowadays, — is most important. It is the commonest thing in the world, at the present time, to assume that what is poetical is poetry. The two have nothing in common. Fénelon, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, George Sand are poetical, but they are not poets; that is to say, they are incapable of writing verse, even mediocre verse, a special gift possessed by people greatly inferior in merit to these illustrious masters. To attempt to separate verse from poetry is a modern piece of folly that tends to nothing less than the destruction of art itself. I find in an excellent article on Taine, by Sainte-Beuve, in connection with Pope and Boileau, who are rather scornfully spoken of by the author of

the "History of English Literature," the following clean cut and judicious paragraph, in which the matter is put in its proper light by that great critic who began by being a great poet, and is still so: "But can I, with regard to Boileau, accept the strange judgment passed upon him by a clever man, whose contemptuous opinion M. Taine endorses, since he quotes it by the way: 'There are two kinds of verse in Boileau: the greater number, which seem to have been written by a schoolboy, and the smaller number, which seem to have been written by a college student'? The clever man who says this (Guillaume Guizot) does not understand Boileau the poet, and I shall go farther and say that he must be incapable of understanding the poet in any poet. I can well understand that poetry should not be supposed to consist of the technical part of the art only, but I fail to understand how, when art is in question, no account should be taken of the art itself, and that consummate workmen who excel in it should be so abused. It would be quicker to suppress all poetry in verse; but if this be not done, the men who knew its secrets should be spoken of more respectfully. Boileau was one of the small number of men who did so, and Pope likewise."

It would be impossible to put the matter more clearly or more correctly. When a poet is in question, the manner in which his verse is wrought is a matter of considerable importance worth studying, for it constitutes in great part the intrinsic value of that verse. It is the stamp with which he mints his gold, silver, or copper. Baudelaire, while he accepted the chief improvements or reforms introduced by Romanticism, such as richness of rimes, the displacement at will of the cæsura, the running into or encroaching upon the next line, the use of exact or technical terms, the fulness and firmness of rhythm, the casting of the great Alexandrine in one unbroken length, and the whole of that careful mechanism of prosody and cadence in stanzas and strophes, Baudelaire nevertheless exhibits in his verse his own peculiar architectonics, his own individual formulæ, his own easily recognised structure, his own professional secrets, his own knack, if I may say so, his own private mark, C. B., which is always to be found upon rime or hemistich.

He makes frequent use of lines of twelve or eight feet, these being the moulds in which he prefers to cast his thoughts. Poems divided into quatrains or stanzas are more numerous in his works than those

in which rimes follow regularly. He is fond of the harmonious interlacing of rimes which postpones the echo of the note first sounded, and strikes the ear with a naturally unexpected sound which, like that in the first line, will be completed later and cause the satisfaction which perfect accord causes in music. He is usually careful that the final rime shall be full, sonorous, and backed up by the supporting consonant, so that it may possess the vibration which prolongs the last note struck.

Among his poems are many which bear the outward appearance and external form of the sonnet, although he has never prefixed the title "Sonnet" to any of them. This is no doubt due to literary scruple, and is an instance of conscientiousness in prosody, of which I fancy I can trace the origin in the article wherein he relates the visit he paid to me and the conversation we had together. It will be remembered that he was bringing me a volume of verse, the work of two absent friends, whom he had been asked to represent. In his account I find the following passage: "After having rapidly glanced through the volume, he called my attention to the fact that these poets too often allowed themselves to indulge in *libertine* sonnets; that is, in

sonnets that were unorthodox and in which the law of the quadruple rime was unhesitatingly neglected." At this time the greater number of "The Flowers of Evil" were already written, and there were among them a good many *libertine* sonnets, which not only lacked the quadruple rime, but in which, furthermore, the rimes were interlaced in wholly irregular fashion; for in the orthodox sonnet, as it was composed by Petrarch, Felicaja, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Sainte-Beuve, the second and third lines of the quatrains must end in two similar rimes, either masculine or feminine, as the poet pleases, which distinguishes the sonnet quatrain from an ordinary one, and regulates, according as the rime of the first and fourth is mute or sonorous, the order and arrangement of the rimes in the two tercets that complete this form of short poem, which is less difficult to write than Boileau thinks, precisely because of its fixed geometrical form; just as in ceilings, polygonal or oddly designed compartments help, rather than hinder, painters by circumscribing the space within which they must set and keep their figures. Not unfrequently, by the use of foreshortening and ingenious composition, it is possible to place a giant within one of these restricted spaces, and the work gains by being

so concentrated. Similarly a great thought can easily find room to move about in comfort within the fourteen methodically arranged lines.

The rising school allows itself to indulge in very many *libertine* sonnets, and I own this is peculiarly disagreeable to me. Why should a man, if he desires to be untrammelled and to dispose his rimes as he pleases, choose a rigorous form that does not admit of any variation or play of fancy? What can be more illogical and annoying than irregularity in regularity and lack of correspondence in symmetry? Every violation of the rule pains me like a doubtful or false note. The sonnet is a sort of poetic fugue, the theme of which must necessarily recur again and again until it is resolved in the regular way. A writer must therefore submit absolutely to the laws that govern it, or else, if he considers that these laws are old-fashioned, pedantic, and troublesome, he should not write sonnets at all. In this matter the masters to be consulted are the Italians and the poets of the Pleiad, and it would not be out of the way to read the work in which Guillaume Colletet treats, *ex professo*, of the sonnet. It may be said of him that he has exhausted the subject.

But enough on these libertine sonnets which Maynard was the first to make fashionable. As for sonnets duplicated, related, septenary, coda, estrambot, retrograde, repeating, inverted, acrostich, mesostich, lozenge-shaped and saltire, these be pedantic exercises, the models of which are to be found in Rabanus Maurus, in "The Spanish and Italian Apollo," and in the treatise devoted to them by Antonio Tempo, but which should be contemned as mere laboriously puerile difficulties and versified puzzles.

Baudelaire often seeks to produce his musical effects by the use of one or more peculiarly melodious lines that form a refrain, and that reappear in turns, as in the Italian stanza called sextain, of which there are several happy examples in the Count de Gramont's verse. He uses this form, which has something of the faint swing of a magical incantation dimly heard in a dream, in subjects of sorrowful remembrances and unfortunate love. The stanzas, with their monotonous soughing, bear the thought away and bring it back, rocking it the while as a flower fallen from the bank is rocked in the regular volutes of the billows. Like Longfellow and Edgar Allan Poe he occasionally resorts to alliteration, that is, the determinative recur-

rence of a certain consonant which is to produce a harmonious effect within the body of the line. Sainte-Beuve, who perceived every one of these refinements and put them in practice in his own exquisite art, once said, in a sonnet of unspeakable and thoroughly Italian sweetness: —

> "Sorrento restored to me my sweet infinite dream."
> ("Sorrente m'a rendu mon doux rêve infini.")

Any delicate ear will appreciate the charm of the liquid thus brought in four times, and which seems to bear one away on its breast into the infinite of dreams as a sea-gull's feather is borne away on the blue billows of the Bay of Naples. Alliteration is frequently met with in Beaumarchais' prose, and the scalds made large use of it. No doubt these minutiæ will seem very frivolous to utilitarian, progressive, and practical, or simply clever, men who think, with Stendhal, that verse is a childish form that was good enough for the primitive ages, but who insist that poetry should be written in prose as beseems an age of common-sense. Yet it is precisely these minutiæ that cause verse to be good or bad, and that distinguish the true poet from the sham.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Baudelaire is fond of great polysyllabic words, and with three or four such he often writes lines that seem vast and the vibrant resonance of which lengthens the metre. To the poet, words have in themselves, and apart from the meaning they convey, a value and a beauty of their own, like gems yet uncut and unset in bracelets, necklaces, and rings. They delight the connoisseur who gazes upon them and sorts them out with his hand in the little vase wherein they are kept in reserve, just as a jeweller might do when thinking over the design of an ornament of gems. There are words that are diamonds, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and others that shine like phosphorus when they are rubbed, and it is no small task to make a choice from among them.

The great Alexandrines of which I was speaking a while ago, and that in calm spells ebb away on the shore with quiet, slow undulations of the swell from the open sea, sometimes break with mad fury of spray and cast their white spume on high against a grim, overhanging cliff, from which they fall back in briny showers. His lines of eight feet are abrupt, violent, cutting like the thongs of a cat-o'-nine-tails, and their lashes sting the shoulders of evil consciences and hypo-

critical compromises. They also lend themselves to the expression of funereal fancies; the author sets in that metre, as in a black wood frame, night views of cemeteries, with nyctalopian eyes of owls shining out of the shadows, and robbers of tombs and body-snatchers, the thieves of death, gliding with spectral steps behind the bronze-green curtain of yew trees. It is in lines of eight feet that he paints sinister heavens in which a moon sicklied o'er by Canidian incantations moves above gibbets; in them that he describes the arctic weariness of the dead woman who has passed from her bed of lechery to the bier, and who dreams in her solitude, abandoned even by the worms, as she starts under the drop of icy rain that has filtered through the boards of the coffin; or again he exhibits to us, in all its litter, pregnant with meaning, of faded bouquets, old letters, ribbons, and miniatures pell-mell with pistols, daggers, and vials of laudanum, the room of the cowardly lover, visited contemptuously, as it takes its walks abroad, by the ironic spectre of suicide, for death itself will not cure him of his shameful lusts.

From the structure of the verse let us pass to the woof and warp of the style. Baudelaire weaves in it threads of silk and gold with strong, rough threads of

hemp, as in those stuffs of the East, at once superb and coarse, in which the most delicate ornaments are embroidered in a delightfully fanciful way upon a ground of harsh camel's-hair or coarse cloth, rough to the touch as sail-cloth. The most coquettish refinements, the most subtle, even, are thrown side by side with grim brutalities, and the reader passes suddenly from the boudoir with its heady scents and its voluptuously languorous conversations, to the vile pot-house where drunkards, mingling blood with their wine, are knifing each other for the sake of a street Helen.

"The Flowers of Evil" are the finest gem in Baudelaire's poetic crown. It is in them that he sounded a note wholly his own, and proved that even after the incalculable number of volumes of verse, which seemed to have exhausted every possible subject, it was still possible to bring to the light something new and unexpected, without necessarily indulging in absurdities or causing the whole procession of universal history to file past as in a German fresco. It was his translation of Edgar Allan Poe, however, that chiefly won him fame; for in France it is the prose works of poets that are read by preference, and it is newspaper articles that spread the knowledge of their verse. Baudelaire natu-

ralised among us that strange genius, so strikingly, so markedly, so exceptionally original, who at the outset scandalised the United States rather than charmed them; not that there is anything in his works to offend morality, — on the contrary, he is chaste as a maiden or a seraph; but he upset all preconceived notions, all practical commonplaces, and afforded no standard by which he could be judged. Edgar Allan Poe shared none of the American ideas on progress, perfectibility, democratic institutions, and other themes for spread-eagle oratory dear to the Philistines of the one and of the other continent. He did not worship the Almighty Dollar exclusively; he loved poetry for its own sake, and preferred the beautiful to the useful; which was monstrous heresy. Furthermore, he possessed the gift of writing well, which has the property of horrifying fools in every clime. A worthy newspaper or magazine editor, a friend of Poe's and kindly disposed towards him, confesses that it was difficult to employ him, and that he could not be paid as well as others, because he wrote in a style too far above the vulgar; which was a very good reason. The biographer of the author of "The Raven" and "Eureka," says that if Edgar Poe had only controlled his genius and applied

his creative power in a way better suited to American ideas, he might have become a money-making author. But he was unruly, insisted on doing as he pleased, and worked only when he felt disposed and only on such subjects as suited his fancy. His vagabond humour led him, like a rolling stone, from Baltimore to New York, from New York to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia to Boston or Richmond, but never allowed him to settle down anywhere. In his moments of gloom, distress, or despair, when the over-excitement due to feverish work was followed by the prostration literary men know so well, he would drink brandy, a fault with which he has been bitterly reproached by the Americans, who, as all the world knows, are models of temperance. He did not blind himself to the disastrous consequences of this vice, for he wrote in "The Black Cat" the following fateful lines: "What disease is there comparable to drink!" He did not drink for the sake of making himself drunk, but in order to forget, or perhaps to put himself in a condition of hallucination favourable to his work, or perhaps again to be done with a life that had become intolerable, and yet to avoid the scandal of a suicide. One day, on the street, he was seized with a fit of delirium tre-

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The "Tales of Mystery, Imagination,
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criticisms in which the translator analy
the highly novel and eccentric character
Poe, whom France, with its utter lack-

foreign individualities, was deeply ignorant of until Baudelaire revealed him to it. He brought to this task, which was necessitated by a character so utterly outside the pale of ordinary ideas, uncommon metaphysical sagacity and rare keenness of vision. These pages are to be reckoned among the most remarkable things he has done.

Curiosity was excited to the highest pitch by the strange tales, so mathematically fantastic, that are developed by means of algebraical formulæ, and which in their expositions resemble judicial inquiries conducted by the most perspicacious and subtle magistrate. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Stolen Letter," "The Gold Bug" — riddles more difficult to guess than those set by the Sphinx, but the answer to which comes in always in so plausible a manner — became all the rage with a public of readers tired of novels of adventure and manners. People went crazy over Auguste Dupin, endowed with so strange and lucid a power of divination, who seems to hold in his hands the thread that connects the most dissimilar ideas, and who reaches his end by such wonderfully correct inductions. They admired Legrand, who was superior, in the deciphering of cryptograms, even to Claude Jacquet, the clerk in the

Government office, who, in "The Story of the Thirteen," reads to the Desmarets, with the old key that belongs to the Portuguese embassy, the cipher letter written by Ferragus, — the result of the reading being the discovery of Captain Kidd's treasure. Every one confessed that while the death's-head and the kid, the rows of dots, crosses, commas, and figures, might have shown again and again, in the light of the flame, in red on the yellowed parchment, they would never have guessed where the great corsair had hidden the huge chest full of diamonds, gems, watches, gold chains, ounces, quadruples, doubloons, rix-dollars, piastres and coins of all countries that reward Legrand's sagacity. "The Pit and the Pendulum," produced a suffocation of terror equal to the most sombre inventions of Anne Radcliffe, Lewis, and the reverend Father Maturin, and readers became giddy as they gazed down the swift-spinning abyss of the Maelstrom, a colossal funnel on the walls of which ships revolve round and round like bits of straw in a whirlpool. The strongest nerves were shaken by "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," while "The Fall of the House of Usher," induced deep melancholy. Tender souls were peculiarly touched by the female figures, so vaporous, so

transparent, so romantically pale and of almost spectral beauty, whom the poet has called Morella, Ligeia, Lady Rowena Trevanion, Lady Tremaine, Eleonora, but which are merely the incarnation under varied forms of an only love that persists after the death of the adored one, and traverses avatars ever revealed.

In France henceforth the name of Baudelaire was indissolubly associated with that of Edgar Allan Poe, and the recollection of the one immediately brings the other to remembrance. At times indeed one would think the American writer's ideas were really the Frenchman's.

Like most poets in the present day, when arts, less widely divided than was the case formerly, are close neighbours and admit of frequent transpositions, Baudelaire had the taste and feeling for, and the knowledge of painting. He wrote some remarkable reviews of the Salon, among others notices on Delacroix, in which he analysed with extreme penetration and subtilty, the artistic nature of the great Romanticist painter. He is full of him, and in some remarks upon Edgar Allan Poe, I come upon this significant sentence: "Like our own Eugène Delacroix, who has raised his art to the level of great poetry, Edgar Poe loves to make his figures

move against purplish and greenish backgrounds, which betray the phosphorescence of rottenness and the odour of the storm." How true is the feeling in this simple sentence called out by the painter's hot and passionate colouring. As a matter of fact the charm of Delacroix for Baudelaire was due to the *diseased* character of his talent, that was so restless, so troubled, so nervous, so inquisitive, so exasperated, so paroxysmal, — if I may be pardoned the expression, which alone renders my thought correctly, — so tormented by the maladies, the melancholy, the feverish ardour, the convulsive efforts, and the vague dreams of the present time.

For a moment the Realistic school fancied it might claim Baudelaire. Some of the pictures in "The Flowers of Evil," outrageously crude in their truthfulness, and in which the poet had not hesitated at the reproduction of hideousness of any sort, led superficial minds to fancy that he was inclining to that doctrine. But they failed to notice that these so-called realistic pictures were always elevated by character, effect, or colour, and that, besides, they formed contrasts to suave and ideal pictures. Baudelaire welcomed the advances made to him, to a certain extent, visited the studios of Realistic artists,

and agreed to write about Courbet, the master painter of Ornans, an article that never appeared. However, at one of the recent Salons, Fantin placed Charles Baudelaire, with his serious expression and his ironical smile, in a corner of the conclave of so-called Realistic painters and sculptors whom he has ranged in a curious frame, like the attendant figures at an apotheosis, round Eugène Delacroix' medallion. Assuredly Baudelaire had the right to appear there as an admirer of Delacroix. But was he intellectually and sympathetically one of that company, whose tendencies could not accord with his aristocratic tastes and his aspiration to the beautiful? In him, as I have already pointed out, the use of the ugly and the vulgar was but a species of manifestation and of horrified protest, and I greatly question whether Courbet's blowzy "Venus," a horrible Callipyge scullion, ever charmed him, for he loved exquisite elegance, refined mannerisms, and skilled coquetry. It is not that he was incapable of admiring grandiose beauty; the man who wrote "The Giantess" must have loved "Dawn" and "Night," the magnificent female colossi, with such superb lines, which Michael Angelo placed upon the pediment of the tomb of the Medici. His philosophical and metaphysical views,

besides, necessarily separated him from that school, with which he should on no account be connected.

Far from delighting in the real, he eagerly sought the abnormal, and when he came upon an original and peculiar type, he followed it up, studied it, tried to find the end of the thread and to unwind it to the very end. It was thus that he had become deeply infatuated with Guys, a mysterious personage whose business it was to repair to any part of the world where an event occurred, in order to make sketches of it for the English illustrated press.

Guys, whom I knew, was a great traveller, a keen and thorough observer, and a true humourist. At a glance he took in the characteristic points of men and things; with a few strokes of his pencil he hit off their likeness on his sketch-book, inked in his outline, as cursive as stenography, and boldly washed it in with a flat tint to indicate the colouring.

He was not an artist, properly speaking, but he had the peculiar gift of rapidly seizing the outward appearance of things. At a glance, with unequalled clear-sightedness, he lighted upon the characteristic trait in anything — that trait, and no other — and brought it out strongly; instinctively or purposely disregarding the

complementary parts. Whether he had to draw a dandy or a street ruffian, a great lady or a girl of the lower class, he was unequalled in marking the attitude, the turn, the personality. He possessed in a high degree the feeling for modern corruption, in the upper and in the lower strata of society alike, and he also gathered his bouquet of flowers of evil in the form of sketches. No one approached Guys in rendering the elegant slenderness and the mahogany gloss of a race-horse, and he was just as clever in the way he made a courtesan's dress fall over the edge of a pony-chaise as in the way he sat a nobleman's powdered and furred coachman on the huge box of a great coupé hung on eight springs and with blazoned panels, driving off to the Queen's Drawing-room with three footmen hanging on to the embroidered straps behind. In this off-hand, clever, fashionable sort of sketching, devoted to high-life subjects, he seems to have been the precursor of the bright artists of *la vie parisienne*, Marcelin, Hadol, Morin, Crafty, whose work is so thoroughly modern, up to date, and telling. Guys, however, not only reproduced, in a way that would have won praise from a Brummel, the dandies in the first flight of fashion and the grand airs of the ducal world, he also excelled in reproducing

the loud dresses and the ribald ways of the venal nymphs of the Argyle Rooms and Piccadilly Hall; nor did he hesitate to make his way into some of the deserted lanes and to sketch by the light of the moon or the quivering flicker of a gas-lamp the figure of one of those spectres of pleasure who wander about the pavements of London; while, when he was in Paris, he sought out, even in the dens described by Eugène Sue, the exaggerated fashions of houses of ill-fame and what might be termed the coquetry of the gutter. Of course all that Guys looked for there was something characteristic. That was his great passion, and he brought out with astonishing accuracy the picturesque and individual side of the types, ways, and dress of our day. His was therefore a talent that could not fail to delight Baudelaire, and in fact the latter prized him highly. I possessed some sixty drawings, sketches, and water-colours by this humourist of the pencil, and I gave some to my poet friend, who was greatly charmed with the gift and bore them off jubilantly.

He quite appreciated the shortcomings of these rapid sketches, to which Guys himself attached no importance once they had been transferred to the wood-block by the clever engravers of the *Illustrated London News*; but he

was struck by the wit, the clear-sightedness and the power of observation, thoroughly literary qualities, expressed by the graphic method. What he liked in these drawings was the complete absence of antiquity, that is, of classical tradition, and the deep feeling for what I shall call "decadence," for lack of a word that will more accurately render my meaning; but I have explained what it was that Baudelaire meant by decadence. He has said somewhere, with reference to these literary distinctions: "It is as if two women were presented to me; the one, a rustic matron, sickeningly healthy and virtuous, without any style or go about her; in a word, *owing nothing save to nature alone:* the other, one of those beauties who compel and haunt one's remembrance, uniting to her own deep and individual charm the eloquence of dress, walking with assured gait, self-conscious, and mistress of herself, speaking with a voice like a well-tuned instrument, her glances charged with thoughts and expressing no more than she chooses. There can be no doubt as to what my choice would be; yet there are pedagogic sphinxes who would be sure to reproach me with failing in my duty to classical honour."

This most original way of looking at modern beauty inverts the problem, for it assumes that the beauty of

antiquity is primitive, coarse, and barbaric, — no doubt a paradoxical opinion, but one that may very well be maintained. Balzac greatly preferred an elegant, dainty, coquettish Parisian woman, her figure set off in her long shawl by the motion of her elbows, tripping furtively to a rendezvous, her Chantilly lace veil drawn down over her face, and bending her head in a way to show, between the lower part of the bonnet and the upper fold of the shawl, an ivory-white neck upon which curl in the light two or three wisps of stray hair, — he preferred her, I repeat, to the Venus of Milo herself. And there is no doubt that the Parisian woman has a charm of her own, though I myself like the Venus of Milo a great deal better; but that is because, in consequence of my early education and a peculiar sense, I am more an artist than a literary man.

It can be understood that, holding such views as these, Baudelaire should for a time have felt drawn towards the realistic school of which Courbet is the god and Manet the high-priest. But if certain sides of his nature found satisfaction in the direct and non-traditional representation of contemporary ugliness, or triviality, at least his love for art, elegance, luxury, and beauty drew him towards a higher sphere, and Dela-

croix, with his feverish passion, his stormy colouring, his poetic melancholy, his sunset palette, and his skilled technique of a decadent artist, became and remained his chosen master.

I now come to a remarkable work of Baudelaire's, half a translation, half original, called "Artificial Paradises, Opium and Hascheesh," upon which I must dwell, for it had no small share in spreading among the public, ever ready to accept as true reports unfavourable to literary men, the belief that the author of "The Flowers of Evil" was in the habit of seeking inspiration in stimulants. This belief was further confirmed by the poet's death, which followed upon a stroke of paralysis that rendered him powerless to communicate his thoughts, which remained quick and active in his brain. It was said that the paralysis was due to the excessive use of hascheesh or opium, in which Baudelaire had at first indulged through fancy, and which he had continued in consequence of the fatal attraction exercised by deadly drugs. As a matter of fact, the one and only cause of his illness was the fatigue, the annoyances, the troubles and embarrassments of all sorts that are inherent in literary life in the case of all men whose talent does not lend itself to regular

and easily produced work, such as newspaper work, for instance, and the originality of whose productions terrifies timid editors of reviews. Like every worker, Baudelaire was sober, and while he admitted that a taste for creating an "artificial paradise" by means of some stimulant, whether opium, hascheesh, wine, alcohol, or tobacco, seems to be ingrained in man's nature, since it is to be met within every age, in every country, among barbarians as among civilised men, and even among savages, he considered it a proof of original perversity, an impious attempt to avoid *needful* pain, a mere Satanic suggestion to usurp at once the happiness intended to reward, later, resignation, force of will, virtue, and persistent striving after the good and the beautiful. He believed that the devil said to hascheesh eaters and laudanum bibbers, as formerly to our first parents: "In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods," and that he lied to them just as he had lied to Adam and Eve; for the next day the god, weakened and enervated, has sunk below the level of the brute, and remains isolated in void immense, bereft of all means of escaping from himself save by having recourse to his poison, the dose of which he is compelled to increase gradually. It is possible and even

probable that Baudelaire did try hascheesh once or twice, by way of physiological experiment, but he never made continuous use of it. Besides, he felt much repugnance for that sort of happiness, bought at the chemist's and taken away in the vest-pocket, and he compared the ecstasy it induces to that of a maniac for whom painted canvas and rough drop-scenes take the place of real furniture and gardens balmy with the scent of genuine flowers. He came but seldom, and merely as an observer, to the meetings in Pimodan House, where our club met, meetings which I have described in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, under the title "The Hascheesheen Club," adding an account of my own hallucinations. After trying it some ten times or so, I gave up the seductive drug for ever, not that it hurt me physically, but because a real writer needs no other than his own natural dreams, and does not care to have his thought controlled by the influence of any agency whatever.

Balzac came to one of these evenings, and Baudelaire thus relates his visit: "Balzac no doubt held the belief that there is no deeper shame nor worse suffering for a man than to renounce control over his own will. I saw him once at a meeting where the prodigious

effects of hascheesh were being discussed. He listened and asked questions with amusing attention and vivacity. Those who knew him will readily guess that he was interested. But the idea of thinking in spite of himself shocked him deeply; he was offered some dawamesk; he examined it, smelt it, and returned it without touching it. The struggle between his almost childish curiosity and his dislike for abdication exhibited itself on his expressive face in a striking manner. The love of self-dignity won the day. And indeed it is difficult to think of the theorist of *will*, of Louis Lambert's spiritual twin, consenting to part with a single particle of that precious *substance*."

I was at Pimodan House that night, and I am in a position to certify to the absolute accuracy of the story. I will merely add this characteristic trait: as he handed back the spoonful of dawamesk that had been offered him, Balzac remarked that it would be of no use to make the test, for he was sure that hascheesh would have no effect upon his brain.

This was quite possible, for his powerful brain, the seat of a will fortified by study, saturated with the subtle aroma of mocha, and that was not in the least dimmed by the drinking of three bottles of the headiest

Vouvray, might well have been capable of resisting the transitory intoxication caused by Indian hemp. Hascheesh or dawamesk, I find I have forgotten to say, is simply a decoction of *Cannabis Indica*, mixed with some fatty substance, honey, and pistachio, in order to make it of the consistency of paste or preserves.

Medically speaking, "The Artificial Paradises" constitute a very well written monograph of hascheesh, and science might find in it reliable information; for Baudelaire piqued himself on being scrupulously accurate, and not for the world would he have allowed the smallest poetic imagery to slip into a subject that was naturally adapted to it. He specifies quite correctly the peculiar character of hascheesh hallucinations, which does not create anything, but merely develops the particular temperament of the individual while exaggerating it to its highest power. What is seen is one's own self, enlarged, rendered more acutely sensitive, excited beyond all reason, outside the confines of time and space, of which the very notion vanishes, in surroundings that are real to begin with, but which are speedily deformed, intensified, exaggerated, and in which every detail, extreme in its intensity, assumes supernatural importance, that, however, is readily apprehended by the

hascheesh eater, who perceives mysterious relations between images often incongruous.

If there should be heard music apparently performed by a celestial orchestra and seraph choirs, in comparison with which the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are but annoying discords, it is because a hand has fingered the keyboard of the piano or a distant organ has cast into the noise of the street some well known opera air. If the eyes are dazzled by the streaming, the scintillation, the irradiation, and the coruscation of light, it is because so many tapers are blazing in sconces and candelabra. If the wall ceases to be opaque and reveals a hazy distance, far reaching and azured, like a window opened out into the infinite, it is because a mirror is shimmering opposite the dreamer, with its diffused shadows mingled with fantastic transparencies. The nymphs, the goddesses, the graceful, or burlesque, or terrible apparitions are produced by the pictures, the tapestries, the statues that exhibit their mythological nudity in niches, or by the grotesques that are grimacing on the whatnots.

The case is the same with the olfactory ecstasies that transport one into paradises of perfumes, where marvellous flowers, their cups swinging as if they were

censers, scatter the scent of aromatics, and nameless, subtly penetrating odours, that recall the remembrance of lives that have been lived already, of balmy, distant shores, and of primitive loves in some dreamland Tahiti. One need not look long to discover in the room a pot of heliotrope or tuberose, a scented sachet, or a cashmere shawl impregnated with patchouli and carelessly thrown upon a chair.

It will be seen, then, that if it is desired to enjoy fully the wonders of hascheesh, they have to be prepared beforehand, and motives, so to speak, must be furnished for its extravagant changes, and its disorderly fancies. It is necessary to be in sound physical and mental condition, to be free for the nonce from cares and duties and appointments, and to be in a room such as Baudelaire loved, and such as Edgar Allan Poe, in his descriptions, furnishes with poetic comfort, quaint luxury, and mysterious elegance; a retreat concealed from all eyes, which seems to await the beloved soul, the ideal womanly form, the one that Chateaubriand in his language calls *the sylphid.* Under these circumstances it is probable, indeed almost certain, that naturally agreeable sensations will turn into beatitude, ravishment, ecstasy, inexpressible delight, far superior to the material

joys promised to the faithful in that Mahometan paradise which too closely resembles a seraglio. The green, red, and white houris that emerge from the hollow pearls they inhabit and offer themselves to the faithful in ever renewed virginity, would be but coarse wenches in comparison with the nymphs, the angels, the sylphids, perfumed mists, ideal transparencies, forms breathed out of rosy and azure light, standing out bright against suns and emerging from the depths of the infinite with starry rush, like the silvery globules in gaseous liquids from out a crystal cup, whom the hascheesh eater sees passing in countless legions through the dream he dreams while wide-awake.

But for these precautions the ecstasy may well turn to nightmare. Delight changes into suffering, joy into terror; terrible anguish clutches at the throat, presses its knee upon the chest, and crushes the dreamer with its tremendous weight, as if the Sphinx of the Pyramids or the King of Siam's elephant were indulging in the fun of flattening him out. Or else icy cold seizes upon him and turns him into marble up to the hips, like the king in the "Thousand and One Nights," half changed into a statue, whose wicked wife beat him every morning on the shoulders, which had remained sensitive.

Baudelaire relates the hallucinations of two or three men of different temperaments, and one experienced by a woman in the room lined with mirrors, over which runs gilded trellis-work festooned with flowers, which it is easy to recognise as being the boudoir in Pimodan House, and he adds to each vision an analytical and moral commentary, in which is plainly seen his repugnance to any happiness obtained by fictitious means. To begin with, the ideas themselves are not so entrancing as is believed. Their main charm is due to the extreme nervous excitement of the subject. Then hascheesh, which creates these ideas, at the same time destroys the power of turning them to account, for it annihilates the will and plunges its victims into a languid weariness which renders the mind incapable of any exertion, and which can be overcome only by taking another dose. "Finally," adds Baudelaire, "even if we admit for the moment that there may be constitutions sufficiently strong and vigorous to resist the evil effects of the noxious drug, there remains another danger which must not be lost sight of, the deadly, terrible danger of habit. The man who has recourse to poison in order *to make himself* think, will soon be unable to think *unless he takes* poison. What must be the fate of a man whose

paralysed imagination is unable to work without the help of hascheesh and opium!"

Farther on he states his profession of faith in the following noble words: "Man is not so deprived of legitimate ways of reaching heaven that he should be compelled to call upon pharmacy and witchcraft. There is no reason why he should sell his soul in order to purchase the love and the intoxicating caresses of houris. What can a paradise be worth if it has to be gained at the expense of one's eternal salvation?" There follows a description of an Olympus situated upon the steep mount of spirituality where Raphael's or Mantegna's Muses, led by Apollo, surround with their rhythmic choirs the artist who has devoted himself to the worship of beauty, and reward his persistent efforts. "Below him," goes on Baudelaire, "at the foot of the mount, amid brambles and mud, the host of men, the band of helots, simulate the grimaces of enjoyment and utter howls drawn from one and all by the sting of the poison, while the saddened poet says to himself: 'These unfortunates, who have neither prayed nor fasted, who have refused to be saved by work, are asking of black magic the power to rise all at once into a supernatural state of life. Sorcery deceives them and

makes sham happiness and sham light to shine upon them, while we poets and philosophers, who have regenerated our souls by constant work and contemplation, by assiduous exercise of will and unchanging nobleness of purpose, have created for our own use a garden of real beauty. Trusting to the declaration that faith can remove mountains, we have accomplished the one miracle God allows us to perform.'"

These words make it difficult to believe that the author of "The Flowers of Evil," in spite of his *satanic* tendencies, paid any frequent visits to artificial paradises.

The study of hascheesh is followed by a study of opium; in this case Baudelaire was guided by a singular work, very famous in England: "The Confessions of an Opium-Eater," by Thomas de Quincey, a distinguished hellenist, a writer of mark, an eminently respectable man, who dared, with tragic candour, to confess, in the country which, of all countries, is most hide-bound in cant, to confess his passion for opium, to describe it, to state its phases, its intermittent character, his own falls and struggles, his enthusiasm and depression, his ecstasies and weird visions, followed by inexpressible tortures. Incredible though it may appear,

de Quincey had got to drinking eight thousand drops a day, by gradually increasing the doses he took; yet he reached the perfectly normal age of seventy-five, dying only in December, 1859, keeping the medical faculty, to whom, in a fit of humour, he had ironically bequeathed his opium-saturated body as an interesting subject for examination, waiting a long time. His vice did not prevent his publishing a large number of literary and erudite works, in which there is nothing to betray the deadly influence of what he himself calls "the black idol." The closing lines of the book give the reader to understand that by putting forth superhuman efforts the author at last managed to rid himself of his thrall, but possibly that is but a concession to morality and conventionality, like virtue rewarded and crime punished at the end of a melodrama, final impenitence being a bad example to set. De Quincey pretends that after using opium for seventeen years and abusing it for eight more he succeeded in giving up the dangerous drug! One should not discourage *theriakis* who manifest good intentions, but is there not infinite love in this lyrical invocation to the brown liquid?

"O just, subtle, and all-conquering opium! that to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that

will never heal, and for the pangs of grief that 'tempt the spirit to rebel,' bringest an assuaging balm; — eloquent opium! that with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath, pleadest effectually for relenting pity, and through one night's heavenly sleep callest back to the guilty man the visions of his infancy, and hands washed pure from blood; — O just and righteous opium! that to the chancery of dreams summonest, for the triumphs of despairing innocence, false witnesses; and confoundest perjury; and dost reverse the sentences of unrighteous judges; — thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles — beyond the splendours of Babylon and Hekatompylos; and 'from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,' callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the 'dishonours of the grave.' Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle, and mighty opium!"

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spectres that yield to no formula of exorcism. One day in the year 1813, a Malay, with yellow, bilious complexion and eyes filled with nostalgia, coming from London and striving to reach some seaport or other, unacquainted with a single word of any European language, knocked at the cottage door and asked to be allowed to rest himself. Not wishing, in the presence of his servants, to seem not to understand him, de Quincey addressed the man in Greek; the Oriental answered in Malay, and honours were easy. The owner of the cottage, after giving the man some money, impelled by the charitable impulse that leads a smoker to offer a cigar to some poor wretch who has probably not tasted tobacco for a long time, presented the Malay with a large lump of opium, which the latter swallowed at a gulp. There was enough to kill seven or eight people not used to the drug, but the yellow-skinned man was no doubt accustomed to it, for he went off with every mark of deepest gratitude and satisfaction. He was never again seen, in the flesh, at least, but he became one of the most frequent figures in de Quincey's visions. This Malay, with his saffron face and weirdly black eyes, became a sort of genie from the Far East, who held the keys of Ind, Japan, China, and other

countries that, so far as rest of the world is concerned, are fantastically and impossibly distant. Just as one follows the steps of an unbidden guide, whom one must nevertheless follow, as the result of the unavoidable consequences that occur in dreams, de Quincey penetrated, in the company of the Malay, into regions of fabulous age and inexpressible singularity, that filled him with profound terror. "I know not," he says in his Confessions, "whether others share my feelings on this point; but I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad. . . . A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed. . . . In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, by the barrier of utter abhorrence placed between myself and *them*, by counter-sympathies deeper than I can analyse. I could sooner live with lunatics, with vermin, with crocodiles or snakes."

With malicious irony, the Malay, who appeared to note the repugnance felt by the opium-eater, took care to lead him into vast cities, with porcelain towers, roofs with up-curving eaves, adorned with bells that tinkled

ceaselessly, rivers laden with junks, and crossed by carved dragons in the shape of bridges, streets swarming with an unnumbered population of grotesque figures that wagged their little heads inset with almond-shaped eyes, moving their quivering tails like rats, and uttering, with many a bow, monosyllabic compliments.

The sequel to the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" bears the sadly appropriate title *Suspiria de profundis*. In one of the visions appear three unforgettable figures, mysteriously terrible like the Greek Moiræ and the "Mothers" of the second part of "Faust." They are the companions of Levana, the austere goddess who raises the new-born one from the earth and makes him perfect through suffering. Even as there are three Graces, three Parcæ, three Furies, and once even the Muses were but three, so there are three Ladies of Sorrow: the equivalents of our Mother of Sorrows. The eldest of the trio is called *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears; the second, *Mater Suspiriorum*, Our Lady of Sighs; and the third and youngest, *Mater Tenebrarum*, Our Lady of Darkness; she is the most dread of all, and the strongest mind cannot dwell upon the thought of her without experiencing secret horror. These woeful spectres

speak not the tongue of man; they weep, they moan, and make weird gestures in the dim darkness. It is thus they express unknown woes, nameless agonies, the suggestions of lonely despair, all the suffering, the bitterness and grief that lie in the deepest recesses of the human soul. Man must learn his lesson from these hard teachers: "So shall he see the things that ought *not* to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths."

It will readily be understood that Baudelaire does not withhold from de Quincey the reproaches he addresses to all who seek to rise to the supernatural through material means, but he treats him with much kindliness in consideration of the *beauty* of the pictures drawn by the illustrious and poetic dreamer.

About this time Baudelaire left Paris and pitched his tent in Brussels. It was not politics that led him to make the change, but his longing for a quieter life and restful peace, far from the excitements of Parisian existence. He does not seem to have profited by the change, for he worked but little in Brussels, and his papers contain only brief, concise, almost hieroglyphic notes, which he alone could have made anything of.

His health, instead of improving, grew worse, either because it was more shattered than he was aware of himself, or because the climate did not suit him. The first symptoms of the disease manifested themselves in slowness of speech and more and more marked hesitation in the selection of words; as Baudelaire, however, often expressed himself in a slow and sententious fashion, dwelling on the words to give them greater weight, his difficulty of speech was not noticed, albeit it was the forerunner of the terrible malady that was to slay him, and which ere long showed itself in the form of a sudden attack. The report of his death spread through Paris with the winged swiftness of ill news, which seems to travel faster than electricity along its guiding wires. Baudelaire was still alive, but the news, though false, was merely prematurely true; he never recovered from the shock. Brought back from Brussels by his relatives and friends, he lingered on for a few months, unable to speak and unable to write, paralysis having snapped the chain that links speech and thought together. Thought remained alive in his brain, as could plainly be perceived by the expression of his eyes, but it was a prisoner and gagged, devoid of any means of communicating with

the outer world from the earthly cell which was to open only within the tomb. But why linger upon the incidents of that sorrowful end? There is no pleasant way of dying, but it is painful for the survivors to watch the passing away so early of a remarkable talent that was capable of bearing fruit for a still longer time, and to lose on the path of life, ever becoming more and more lonely, a comrade of their youth.

Besides "The Flowers of Evil," his translations of Edgar Allan Poe, "Artificial Paradises," art reviews, and literary criticisms, Charles Baudelaire left a volume of short poems in prose that appeared at various times in newspapers or reviews, which ere long tired of these dainty masterpieces uninteresting to the ordinary run of readers, and compelled the poet, whose noble obstinacy refused to make the slightest concession, to take the next series to a more venturesome or more literary publication. For the first time these poems, scattered pretty much everywhere, and very difficult to find, have been collected into one volume, which will prove to be one of the strongest claims of the poet to be remembered by posterity.

In a short preface, addressed to Arsène Houssaye, and prefixed to the "Short Prose Poems," Baudelaire

relates how the idea of making use of this hybrid form, half prose, half verse, occurred to him: —

"I have a confession to make to you. It was while glancing, for the twentieth time at least, through Aloysius Bertrand's famous 'Gaspard of the Night' (a work known to you, to me, and to some of my friends has surely every right to be entitled famous), that the thought occurred to me to try something of the same sort, and to apply to the description of modern life, or rather to a modern and more abstract life, the method he applied to the picturing of the strangely picturesque life of antiquity.

"Which of us has not, in his ambitious moments, dreamed of a miraculous prose, poetic, musical, without rhythm or rime, pliant enough yet varied enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, to the fluctuations of reverie, to the fits and starts of conscience?"

It is needless to say that there is not the remotest resemblance between "Gaspard of the Night," and the "Short Prose Poems." Baudelaire himself realised the fact as soon as he entered upon the work, and he took due note of this *accident*, of which any other man might perchance be proud, but which was deeply humiliating

to a mind accustomed to consider it the highest honour for a poet to do *exactly* what he intended to do.

Baudelaire, it will be seen, meant invariably to have his will govern his inspiration and to introduce into art a sort of infallible mathematical method. He reproached himself with having turned out something differing from what he had intended, even if it proved to be, as in this case, a strong and original piece of work.

It must be owned that our poetic speech, in spite of the earnest efforts made by the new school to render it more supple and more ductile, does not readily lend itself to the rendering of uncommon and circumstantial details, especially when subjects of modern, familiar, or luxurious life have to be treated. While French verse no longer, as of yore, abhors accuracy of expression and clings to periphrase, its very structure is opposed to the expression of significant peculiarities, and if it persists in forcing these to enter within its narrow setting, the verse itself quickly becomes harsh, rocky, and unpleasant. So the "Short Prose Poems" have come most seasonably to make up for this impotence, and in this form, which calls for exquisite art, and in which every word must be weighed, ere it is

used, in balances more delicate than those of Quentin Matsys' "Misers," since each must bear the right inscription, and have the right weight and sound, Baudelaire brought out a precious, dainty, and odd side of his talent. He has managed to get closer to the inexpressible, and to render the fleeting shades that hover between sound and colour, and thoughts that resemble motives of arabesques or musical themes.

This form is applied successfully not to physical nature only, but to the most secret motions of the soul, to fanciful melancholy, to the splenetic hallucinations of nervous temperaments. The author of "The Flowers of Evil" has drawn marvellous effects from it, and it is surprising at times to find that speech manages to show objects apparently impossible to describe, and hitherto never *reduced* by verbs, now through the transparent gauzy veils of dreams, now with the sudden sharpness of a sunbeam that brings out vividly, in the bluish openings in the distance, a ruined tower, a mountain crest, or a clump of trees. It will be part of Baudelaire's glory, if not his greatest claim to it, to have brought within the possibilities of style numbers of objects, sensations, and effects, unnamed by Adam, the great nomenclator. No writer can wish for higher

praise, and he who wrote the "Short Prose Poems" undoubtedly deserves it.

It is very difficult, unless one has much space at one's command, and in that case it is better to refer the reader to the pieces themselves, to give a correct idea of these compositions: pictures, medallions, *bassi-relievi*, statuettes, enamels, pastels, cameos, following one another somewhat in the way the vertebræ do in a serpent's backbone. A few of them may be removed, yet the pieces join again, still living, each possessing its own individual soul, and convulsively writhing onwards towards an unattainable ideal.

Before I bring to a close, as briefly as possible, this already too lengthy account, — for if I do not I shall leave no room in the volume for the author and friend whose talent I am analysing, and the commentary would obscure the work,— I must be satisfied with quoting the titles of a few of these short poems in prose, which, in my opinion, are infinitely superior, in intensity, concentration, depth, and grace, to the dainty fancies in "Gaspard of the Night," which Baudelaire had taken for a model. Among the fifty poems composing the volume, and which differ in tone and structure, I shall draw attention to "The Cake,"

"The Double-bedded room," "The Crowds," "The Widows," "The Old Mountebank," "A Hemisphere in a Head of Hair," "An Invitation to Travel," "Beauteous Dorothea," "A Heroic Death," "The Thyrsis," "Portraits of Mistresses," "Longing to Paint," "A Blood Horse," and especially "The Blessings of the Moon," an admirable poem in which the poet expresses with magical illusory power what the English painter Millais has so completely failed to render in his "Eve of Saint Agnes": that is, the descent of the orb of night within a room, with its blue phosphorescent light, its iridescent pearly grays, its mistiness interpenetrated by beams in which flutter mothlike, silvery atoms. From its cloud throne the moon bends over the cradle of a sleeping child, bathing it in living light and luminous poison; the pretty pale head is endowed by it with its strange blessings, and like a fairy godmother it whispers in the child's ear: "Thou shalt for ever feel the influence of my kisses; thou shalt be fair as I am fair; thou shalt love what I love: water and clouds, silence and night, the mighty green sea, the wave or fickle or still, the place where thou art not, the lover thou knowest not, monstrous flowers and scents that weaken the will, and cats that writhe

on pianos and moan like women with harsh, soft voices."

I know nothing comparable to this charming poem save the poem of Li-Tai-Pe, so well translated by Judith Walter, in which the Empress of China sweeps on, amid effulgent irradiation, while the folds of her white satin dress trail upon the jade steps that sparkle in the moonlight. A *lunatic* alone could so fully understand the moon and its mysterious speech.

When listening to Weber's music, the first sensation is something like mesmeric sleep, a sort of appeasing that wafts one away from life without the least shock; then there suddenly sounds in the distance a strange note, at which one pricks up one's ears. It is like a sigh from the supernatural world, like the voice of invisible spirits calling to each other. Oberon has just blown his horn, and the enchanted forest opens out, its hazy blue drives prolonged endlessly, swarming with all the fanciful beings Shakespeare describes in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," while Titania herself appears clothed in her transparent silver gauze dress.

Often while reading "Short Prose Poems" have I been impressed in this way; a sentence, a word — a single word — oddly selected and oddly placed calling

up a world of unknown, forgotten faces that yet were the faces of friends, reviving the remembrance of former and far distant lives, and making me feel the presence around me of a mysterious chorus of vanished thoughts, softly whispering amid the ghosts of things that are ever separating from reality. Other sentences, morbidly tender, seem like music, to murmur consolations to unconfessed sorrows and hopeless despair. But one must beware, for they inspire nostalgia just as the *Ranz des Vaches* did to the poor Swiss lansknecht, in the German ballad, who was stationed at Strasburg, swam across the Rhine, was caught, brought back and shot "because he had listened too much to the Alpine horn."

ART AND CRITICISM

VICTOR HUGO

I

PROSPECTUS FOR NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER, 1835.

"NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS" is a work that has passed beyond the need of praise, for the numerous editions it has gone through speak more eloquently than I can in this respect; they have followed one another with prodigious rapidity, and yet have not been numerous enough to satisfy the demands of the public. It is unquestionably the most popular novel of the day, and its success has been complete. Artists and men of the world have been at one in their admiration of it; even the most hostile critics have been unable to refrain from joining in the universal applause, and if it were permissible to set bounds to a genius which is in the prime of its powers and which has such a future before it, it might be said that "Notre-Dame de Paris" is and will remain the poet's finest work.

The novel is a real Iliad. Everything is to be met with in that prose epic, which, had not Victor Hugo been famous already, would alone have made his name for ever illustrious. There is variety in the characters, accuracy in the costumes, lofty, sublime eloquence, genuine, irresistible fun, broad historical views, a pliant and strong plot, a deep feeling for art, Benedictine-like erudition, poetic flow, — everything, in a word.

Byron, who, of all poets, has created the most attractive ideal feminine figures, has not one to oppose to the divine Esmeralda; Gulnare, Medora, and Haydee are as lovely, but not lovelier, and they are not as touching.

Maturin would not have imparted less vigour to the sombre character of Frollo, devoured by his thirst for science, which changes to thirst for love.

Phœbus de Chateaupers cuts as fine a figure under his war harness as the handsome, dark-complexioned, smiling youths, dressed in velvet, who swagger in Paolo Veronese's pictures, with falcon on fist and dog in leash. His careless, brutal good nature is painted with a masterly hand. It is life and truth in very deed.

And who is there who has not laughed with all his heart at the troubles of peripatetic Gringoire, with his

doublet gaping at every seam, his shoes in holes, and his ever unsatisfied appetite? Régnier's starving poets are drawn with no freer and bolder touch.

Then Quasimodo, monstrous snail with Notre-Dame for a shell! Who has not admired his canine devotion and his angelic virtues concealed in a fiend-like frame? Who has not blamed Esmeralda somewhat for not loving him in spite of his double hump, his one eye, his knock-kneed leg, and his boar's-tusk? Who has not wept over poor Chantefleurie? And against how magnificent a background stand out all these figures that have become typical! The whole of Old Paris: its churches, its palaces, its bastiles, Louis XI's privy chamber, and the Court of Miracles; a dead city unearthed and resurrected; a Gothic Pompeii drawn from out the ground; two thousand folio volumes studied, an amount of erudition that would have terrified a German of the Middle Ages acquired on purpose for this! And over it all a dazzling, splendid granite and bronze style, as indestructible as the cathedral it celebrates.

"Notre-Dame de Paris" has even now become a classic.

II

ANGELO

JULY 5, 1835.

ORDINARY dramatists need no more than a single performance. All they care to do is to occupy the stage for a space of three or four hours, to collect, in a part composed for the purpose, all the effective hits of a popular actor, and to furnish an actress with a pretext for changing her dress several times, — so that in the first act she shall wear a white figured satin gown; in the second, one of black velvet, and in the third the inevitable wrapper of organdie or muslin in which she may writhe wildly on the floor without fearing to tear her skirt or to stain it with oil in the middle of a dramatic convulsion. Many a play has been put together merely for the purpose of enabling Miss So and So to show off all her diamonds. But once the satin has lost its gloss, the folds of the velvet have become flabby, and the diamonds have been locked up in the jewel-case, then the play sinks to the lowest depths of sombre Lethe and is forgotten by everybody, including the author himself, who vamps it up six months later, without either he himself or the public being conscious of

the fact. It is true that in the later piece the diva's dress is of gold-flowered brocade, and that she wears feathers instead of a turban, which greatly differentiates the character and turns the old play into a brand-new one.

For such writers a short column of prose worked up hastily, with the name and date at the bottom, suffices to indicate, in the vast dramatic graveyard, the exact place where each of their abortions is buried. But one cannot act in such wise with Hugo.

Every drama by Hugo makes a fine book. All is not over when the curtain has fallen, and the star been called to the footlights. What is of importance to others is but a mere detail to him. The play may have run sixty nights, like "Hernani," or have had but a single performance, like "The King's Sport," it matters not a whit. It matters so little that it is now a well-recognised fact that this same "The King's Sport," so outrageously hissed, is Hugo's best play. The reading public has reversed the judgment of the theatre-going public, and the book has set the theatre right. Every individual in the crowd that shouted Ho! and Ha! at the finest passages, applauded separately. For the poet, face to face with the individual, and freed from countless

material obstructions — wrong reflections from the footlights, a nose here, a pair of legs there, mistakes in the stage setting, and general lack of intelligence — seized upon the man, filled him with his breath, and bore him away on his mighty pinions far above the old hall of the Français.

"Angelo" has met with better fortune upon the stage. Dramas, like books, have their fates. "Angelo" goes on its triumphant way amid the gravest political preoccupations and in a temperature almost tropical. Every day the line at the doors lengthens out and sweeps in the distance through the obscure corridors of the Palais-Royal.

I shall not describe the plot of the play, for everybody is acquainted with it, but I shall treat the book from the point of view of art and style.

The cause of the complete success of "Angelo" is its total lack of lyricism. It is shameful to have to own to that with regard to the public, but so it is. Another and equally sad cause of success is that "Angelo" is a prose drama. Hugo, having resolved to walk on earth, instead of soaring in the heavens, so that the pit might not lose sight of him, wisely put away his talaria in a drawer; for poets are like the hip-

pogriff, they can both run and fly, while the most envious of prose-writers can run only. Any poet, if he chooses to condescend to such a job, can write excellent prose, but never will a born prose-writer, even were he a Chateaubriand, write fine verse.

I have said that the play is not lyrical. Yet at times Hugo's eagle soars loftily, and many of the sentences are genuine strophes of odes. By a somewhat curious contradiction, nearly every one of these passages is applauded to the echo.

Hugo's character is neither English, French, nor German. He is neither profound and human like Shakespeare, magnificently placid and indifferent like Goethe, nor witty and full of sense like Molière. He is self-willed and excessive; he is Spanish and Castilian. He is willing enough to admire Homer and the Bible, if you insist on his doing so, but it is quite certain that he would give the pair of them for the Romancero.

His genius is kin to that of old Corneille, proud and fiercely bristling. Although from time to time he indulges in leonine graces, in giant mincing affectations, he is a terrible draughtsman, quite capable of repeating with Michael Angelo that oil-painting is fit for women and idlers only. He goes straight to the muscles, frees

them from the flesh, and brings them out with prodigious vigour. There are passages in Hugo that might be mistaken for the figures placed in the coigns and pendentives of the Sistine Chapel, whose adductor and extensor muscles are all equally over-developed. But the exaggeration in his style is like that in the men of Buonarotti's, it is an exaggeration in bronze.

Puget said that blocks of marble trembled like leaves when they felt him drawing near, and that they melted in his hands like wax; I fancy the case must be the same with the blocks out of which our poet carves his thoughts. I think I can see him with his iron chisel sending huge pieces flying in every direction, carving with an axe rather than with a chisel, hammering open with mighty blows the gaping mouth of a tragic mask, and working broadly, robustly, without finickiness or daintiness, as behooves a primitive artist whose figures are to be set up on high.

Amid the general enfeeblement of our modern life, in this age of ours when no one thing has preserved any sharp corners, a character with such clean-cut, unworn edges is a regular wonder. That mighty genius should not have been born in our times; he should have appeared in the sixteenth century, shortly before

the production of the "Cid." Not that he would have been greater; but he would have been happier. At that time he would not have had to look upon either the Pantheon or the Exchange; he could have been a painter, a sculptor, an architect, an engineer, and a poet, like Da Vinci, Benvenuto, Buonarotti, and all the rest, for his is an essentially plastic genius, loving and seeking form, like every true young genius. Form is everything, no matter what may have been prated on the subject. Never has a stone quarry been looked upon as an artist of genius; the important point is the fashioning of the stone; else what difference would there be between a block and a statue? What difference would there be between Victor Ducange and Victor Hugo?

The world is the quarry; ideas are the stones, and the poet is the sculptor. The whole question is, does he or does he not know his business.

"Angelo" is a drama in which the tragedy springs from the shock of the situations rather than from a primitive passion. It belongs to the class that comprises "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," and "Troilus and Cressida," — romantic plays of Shakespeare's which rest upon adventures and not upon

generalities, and which are the only dramas possible in a civilisation so highly developed as ours. It is scarcely possible now to construct a play with a mortal sin or a character, — one and the same thing, for characters are made visible by shadows, — and there is nothing on earth less dramatic than virtuous people.

"The Miser," "The Misanthrope," "The Liar," "The Jealous Man," "The Wicked Man," and "The Hypocrite" have been written, but these are subjects to which one may not return, and it would be just as stupid to touch up "Othello" and "Tartuffe." Man's passions and defects are not inexhaustible, and can furnish only a small number of combinations, which have already been reproduced a thousand times over. There are left, therefore, adventures, romance, fancy, the curious working out of style; for the drama of passion and the comedy of manners can neither interest nor amuse any one nowadays, when there are neither manners nor passion left.

The fact that knowledge is so wide-spread militates against the possibility of winning success with an historical drama, and Victor Hugo fully realised this. The best way to succeed on the stage is to surprise the spectator, but how is it possible to introduce surprise into

an historical drama? How can the spectator be led to tremble for this or the other hero, when he knows perfectly well that the said hero died quietly in his bed thirty years ago, after having made his will and received the last sacraments of the Church? How can he interest himself in the fate of a heroine whom he knows to have been hunchbacked and dropsical? So Hugo borrows from history names merely; from the age, its general colouring; from the country, a few local touches; and out of these he weaves a harmonious background for the action he intends to develop.

It might be better even if he used no names at all, and simply called his characters the Duke, the Queen, the Prince, the Princess, and so on. For my own part, I should like fully as well the old names, familiar through long usage, of Silvio, Leander, Persida, and Graciosa, that give to the plays in which they occur a delightful air of improbability. They would have the inestimable advantage of shutting the mouths of all those learned critics who never fail, at every new drama by Hugo, to ask, with their customary sprightliness: "Here is indeed Francis I; but where is Leonardo da Vinci? Where is Luther? Where is the Pope? Where is Caillette? Where is Charles V?

Where are all the people who lived in those days? And where is that glorious sixteenth century itself?"—Why, hang it, it is lying prone, between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, in its eternal shroud, in the bottomless depths of nothingness, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where Time, with its ever young old hands buries the ages that are dead! And I do not see what need there is, when one is talking of an historical character, to lug in all other contemporary historical characters. It is not absolutely indispensable that a drama should be a reproduction of Moréri's Dictionary. But, of course, a critic has to show that he has just been re-reading his histories and chroniclers.

I consider Hugo's dramas are sufficiently accurate. The scene is in Padua, Francisco Donato being Doge. That is all right. If it were in Trebizond, under the reign of Hassan, second of the name, it would be all right, too. The whole point is this: Were you moved? Did you weep? Did you shudder?

A quality which Hugo possesses in as eminent a degree as Anne Radcliffe and Maturin, is the power of producing gloomy and architectural terror, if such an expression be permissible. Angelo's palace is as fear-

fully mysterious a building as the Castle of Udolpho. There is another and unknown palace, of which it is but the outward casing and envelope. This looks like a wall; in reality it is a corridor. This dresser, so wonderfully carved, which Renaissance artists took delight in chiselling, is a door. Stairs ascend and descend in the interior of the pillars; the wainscotting hears and speaks; the tapestries shiver. If Hamlet were here, it is neither a rat nor a Polonius he would pink with his sword, but a sbirro armed with his poniard. Nay, Hamlet would not be so courageous in Padua as at Elsinore, or he might not venture: "There is a secret corridor, that perpetually betrays every hall, every room, every alcove; a sombre corridor the doors of which are known to others than you, and that you feel winding round without knowing exactly where it is; a mysterious sap wherein go and come incessantly unknown men busy about something." At night, one hears the sound of steps in the walls, and wonders whether one of the beautiful paintings of nude courtesans painted by Titian is about to swing outwards and to reveal a bravo who will have to be followed into some deep, dank place whence he alone will emerge.

There are all manner of masked entrances: secret doors that are opened by means of queer little keys. Here a button must be pressed; there a trap be lifted. Piranesi, the great Piranesi himself, the fiend of architectural nightmares, who knows how to round out the blackest of vaults, dripping wet, ready to crash down, who causes to grow amid the rubbish plants that look like serpents, and who twists so hideously the mandragora's misshapen legs between the cracked stones and the disjointed cornices, could not have attained, even in his most delirious and supernatural engravings, an equal power of opaque and stifling terror.

The churches are draped in black, a mass is being chanted, a stone in a vault is being raised, a grave dug for a living being. Behind the handsome brocade curtains, covered with rich embroidery, there is, instead of a bed, a rough wooden scaffold, an axe, and a sheet. Every room is sinister and uninhabitable in its appearance. The very chamber of Tisbe looks like the nave of some deserted church, and in vain does the figured silk drapery fall in dainty folds and its golden threads and flowers shimmer; in vain do the stage masks smile their best on the arm-chairs and the floor. Let the chairs do what they may, they resemble prie-Dieu, and

Rosamond's spangled dress is naught but a shroud forgotten by a phantom. The walls are painted a colour that will scarce show the splash of blood. It is plain that some one is to die there. It is a room delightfully convenient for a murder, and a most fit lodging for the dead.

To tell the truth, I do not believe that Catarina went out of it quite alive, and kind-hearted though Tisbe is, I would not swear that she did not mix a little of the contents of the black vial with those of the white. I think it is only friendly to advise Rodolfo to moderate his transports of joy.

The spy scene has been cut out bodily, but is to be put in again when the play is next performed. It takes place in a sort of cut-throat den, or inn of evil fame, which, it was feared, would prove too much for the sensitiveness of the occupiers of boxes at the Théâtre-Français.

I am not sure how far it is wise to break the fingers or noses off *bassi-relievi*, and to prune the dragons and monsters off a cathedral, but there it is; in the way of *bassi-relievi* the public's preference is for a smoothly planed board. A bough severed from a tree may possibly help to purify the air round the cradle, but it

makes a gaping wound in the bole, and leaves a white scutcheon upon it that is as hideous to look at as an ulcer.

I am not of those who believe that an idea can be withdrawn with impunity from any work. There is a piece of canvas in which there is a knot; the knot is pulled out, but along with it is pulled out the thread of which it is a part, and a tear is made the whole length of the warp. It is the same with ideas. If one be cut out of the first act, there are two in the second which become unintelligible, six in the third, and so on.

Every work is brought forth complete, either well-shapen or misshapen, with well formed legs or crippled; that is all luck. But it does not seem to me that to cut off the thigh because there is a club foot at the end of the leg is the way to make the limb shapely.

As for Hugo's play, it has legs as handsome as those of the Hunting Diana, and all that has been cut off from it is a few locks of hair, that fluttered too capriciously and too freely upon its white shoulders for the taste of the bourgeois of Paris done up in their stiff stocks; but the precious locks, fine and delicate as the loveliest silk, are to be found intact between the satiny pages of the printed book.

III

RACHEL IN "ANGELO"

MAY 27, 1850.

"ANGELO" is the only prose drama Victor Hugo has had performed at the Théâtre Français, but prose like that, so clean, firm, and sculptural, is as good as verse, of which it has the sonority, the brilliancy, and even the rhythm; it is just as literary and as hard to write.

I incline to the belief that all the effects of which prose is susceptible have not yet been availed of in the writing of plays. Almost all the masterpieces in our repertory are in verse, and the few exceptions that might be mentioned merely confirm the rule.

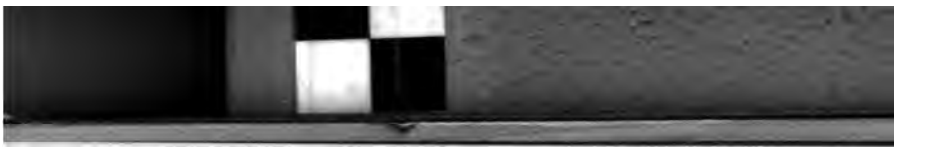
Molière's regular plays, those on which he reckoned, are in verse, and when he makes use of prose, it is with apparent reluctance and when hurried by the King's commands.

His "Banquet of Stone," or, to be more accurate, his "Stone Guest," which is, all the same, marked by its superb style, was later on put into verse by Thomas Corneille, and it is only in these days that it has been restored to its pristine form. For a long time prose was not deemed to be finished enough, difficult enough,

polished enough for presentation to the refined public of the Comédie-Française.

Marivaux and Lesage, who wrote in prose, were for this reason less highly esteemed by the connoisseurs of their day, although they belong to a comparatively modern time. Beaumarchais was the first to triumph with prose on a stage accustomed to the tragic melopeia and the rhythmic laughter of comedy, but then what wonderful prose it was that he wrote! Clever, wrought out, cut in facets, full of skill and of address, fruitful in unexpected resources, in acoustic tricks, in ways of bringing out a sentence, of making words flash, of making hits tell, of producing harmonious or abrupt effects! His skill is such that in certain passages not only does he attain to verse effects, but to musical effects as well, as, for instance, in the tirade on calumny, so that Rossini had merely to accentuate it a little when noting it, in order to make an admirable air for it. Beaumarchais goes so very far that he makes use of assonance and alliteration, and very often of the eight-syllabled blank verse.

Prose of this kind has all the qualities of verse, with greater freedom, rapidity and suppleness, and is probably the sort of tongue best adapted to the stage,



where it could take a place half-way between verse and ordinary speech. We lack on the stage, and it is a pity, the iambic verse of the Greeks and the Latins. We are forced to make use of the heroic verse. The hexameter, or alexandrine, to give it its modern name, although it has been admirably handled by great poets and rendered more flexible through prodigious metrical skill in these latter days, still retains a certain redundancy and emphasis. The ill-placed cæsura is too readily felt in delivery, and spoils the illusion. I do not mean that the difficulty has never been overcome; it has been overcome often and in the most brilliant manner.

If a player be skilful, he will obtain melodious strains from a reed, but a many-keyed flute is all the better. The English and the Germans enjoy great metrical liberty on the stage; Shakespeare starts with prose and ends, after using blank verse, with rimed verse. The Spaniards have the rapid romance octo-syllabic line with its slight assonance, which does not rime when it does not care to do so, or for the purpose of producing an effect. Prose, such as Beaumarchais and Victor Hugo have turned it out, the one for comedy and the other for drama, appears

to me to be quite capable of taking the place of the iambic we lack. This does not mean that I would banish verse from the stage, for although the way of life has turned me into a critic, I remember that I am a poet, and certainly I shall never for one disregard the charm and the rights of poetry; but I do think that there are subjects that can be wrought out more fully in prose than in verse, and that a different order of dramatic ideas would be better expressed by this means.

I was sure that Rachel would score a great success in the part of Tisbe, and that she would be quite at home in lines that are as solid as Corneille's alexandrines. Nothing could better suit her distinct, trained delivery and her deep accents than those sentences which ring on the ideas like brazen armour upon a warrior's shoulders, than the clean, firm, masterly style that projects like a bas-relief cut with a chisel. In her performance of the part of Tisbe, Rachel has made herself the queen of drama as she was already the queen of tragedy. Henceforth she will rule without a rival in the realm of Romanticism as she ruled of yore in the realm of Classicism.

The part of Tisbe, as is well known, was created by

Mlle. Mars. I have no very enthusiastic recollection of that performance, for, I confess it to my shame, that lady's talent never impressed me very much when she played the part. While I do justice to her undoubted qualities, I consider that she but imperfectly understood the character of Tisbe. She possessed in the highest degree commonplace distinction and vulgar good form, if it be not a cruelty to couple these words. She did not possess the high-bred air which may be lacking in a duchess and which is occasionally met with in a gipsy. Graces acquired through study are not the result of a fortunate temperament, but of the persistent exercise of will. It was plain that, like a banker's wife at an aristocratic reception, she was anxious to appear *comme il faut*. There was assuredly no fault to be found with her voice or her gestures, but she did not possess that easy, natural good form which is sure of itself and which forgets itself without ceasing to exist. In a word, she lacked breeding.

The part of Tisbe frightened her; she slurred it over instead of bringing it out; she tamed down the fierceness of it, thinking that by so doing she was making it stylish. She turned Tisbe into a lady who might have been presented in a drawing-room and who would not

have been out of place there. She made the fiery and capricious actress as prosaic as she could, in order that she should be proper. The whole picturesque side of the part disappeared; the costume itself did not exhibit the loud richness characteristic of a courtesan actress, who in private life still bears traces of the stage costuming, and by exaggerating it, avenges herself upon luxury for the shame with which she has to purchase it. Her dress was quite a decent, sober attire in the troubadour style: turbans and toques, epaulets on the sleeves, — a dress, in short, which might be worn at an evening party.

Now Rachel makes a great hit by realising the plastic ideal of the parts she plays. In "Phædra," she is a Greek princess of the heroic days; in "Angelo," she is an Italian courtesan of the sixteenth century, and she is so in a way that is quite unmistakable. No one can possibly take her for anything else, and no sculptor or painter could do better. She at once masters the audience by her imperiously true aspect. In tragedy, she seems to move out of a bas-relief by Phidias as she walks down to the front of the stage; in drama, she seems to emerge from a painting by Bronzino or Titian. The illusion is perfect. She is not only a great actress; she is first and foremost a great artist. Her beauty,

which the bourgeois do not understand, and which they are apt to deny the existence of while yielding to its sway, is amazingly varied. At one time she is like white marble, at another like a warm Venetian painting. She suits herself to the surroundings in which she is to move. Marvellously harmonised is her golden pallor with the pearls, the quillings, the gold sequins, the Cordova leather tapestries and the oak wainscotting. She is just the figure one expects to see in that room, and she stands out strongly from the background. She lives at her ease in that bygone age and makes one believe in the truth of the plot.

It is impossible to imagine anything more radiant, more sparkling, more splendidly indolent than Tisbe's dress as she moves about among the guests, holding in leash the podesta, who grumbles and growls like a tiger whose chain is being pulled too hard by the keeper. It is a true reproduction of the insensate luxury of artistic and debauched Italy in the days when Titian painted the mistresses of princes utterly nude, and Veronese flooded the white steps of terraces with silks, velvets, and gold brocades.

How gracefully inattentive is the air with which she listens to the complaints of the poor tyrant, always lead-

ing him away from the point he wants to make; and how admirably she delivers the tale in which she relates how her mother, a husbandless woman, who sang Morlacca songs upon the public squares, was saved by a sweet child that begged her life just as she was being led to the scaffold for having, it was said, insulted the most sacred Republic in one of her lays. How much feeling, how much emotion there is in the rapid, apparently careless delivery, in the telling, as if constrained and as if to fulfil a duty, to one who is unable to understand. And with what wondrous ease, alike of a great lady and an actress, she diverts the tyrant's suspicions and sends him back to tell Rodolfo that she loves him! It is impossible to be at once more of an actress and more of a woman.

Then, how wheedling, and at the same time — so that she shall not too plainly reveal her purpose — how indifferent is the grace she exhibits in the scene of the key, and in the great quarrel between the honest woman and the courtesan. How she does hold her victim between her teeth, and shake her, and slap her against the wall! Her fury is savage, her ferocity is implacable. She attains the greatest heights of irony and insult, and it seems that in the actress's voice is expressed the whole

sum of rancour long nursed by a proscribed and disinherited race, — that the female pariah is for once avenging herself upon the fortunate in this world, to whom the practice of virtue is so easy, and who nevertheless conceal a lover under their spouse's bed. The accursed race lifts its head and proudly enjoys the right to contemn its contemners, and to insult its insulters. It is the accused judging the judge, the tortured torturing the tortioner; and more yet, it is the courtesan trampling upon the decent woman who has taken her lover from her.

Never have I seen anything more grand, sinister, and terrible. I experienced the same sort of feeling of horrible anguish which one experiences in watching a tigress, with flaming eyes and outstretched claws, turning and twisting round a trembling, terrified gazelle. But when the crucifix makes her recognise in Catarina the maiden who saved her mother's life, at once her wrath vanishes, and you feel that she is disarmed. Later, again, when she realises that Rodolfo does not love her and never has loved her, how superbly she gives up life and harbours no other desire than to have him say now and again: "Tisbe! — yes, she was a kind girl."

It may be boldly affirmed that no one will ever play the part of Tisbe better than Rachel; she has stamped it with an ineffaceable mark. Every actress has in her repertory a part of this kind in which she has summed up her talent. Rachel has two: Phædra in tragedy, and Tisbe in drama. If any one desires to see all she is and can be, it is these two parts she must be seen in. Now that she has set foot upon Hugo's varied stage, she ought to try his Lucrezia Borgia and his Mary Tudor, in which she would find opportunities for successes no less brilliant. The superb female part in "Warwick, or the King Maker," a drama by Auguste Vacquerie, recently accepted by the Comédie-Française, is also very well cut out for her, and she would unquestionably be splendid in it.

IV

VICTOR HUGO AS A DRAUGHTSMAN

JUNE 17, 1838.

HUGO is not a poet only; he is a painter also, and one whom Louis Boulanger, Camille Roqueplan, and Paul Huet would not disavow for their sire. When he travels he sketches everything that strikes him. The ridge of a hill, a broken horizon-line, a strangely

formed cloud, a curious detail on a door or window, a ruinous tower, an old belfry, these are the things that he notes; then at evening, in the inn, he inks in his pencil sketch, puts in shadows and colouring, strengthens it, brings out an effect that is always boldly selected. Thus does the rough draft, hastily dashed off with the paper resting on his knee or on the top of his hat, often done while the carriage is jolting or the ferry-boat rolling, become a drawing much like an etching, with an amount of fancifulness and piquancy that surprises even artists.

The drawing I have before me is a souvenir of a trip through Belgium, and bears on the back the following title: *Lière (?), August 12: drizzling.*

It shows a square the architecture of which is partly Renaissance, partly Gothic, with an effect of storm-swoln clouds heaped up one above another, like pieces of mountains, while from their ripped sides falls a dash of rain, making them look like quivers that have been upset and from which the arrows are tumbling.

A belfry of prodigious height hides in the clouds its brow, on which it bears a coronet of finials and pepper-box turrets; a vane, in the form of a comet with its tail, whirls round at the breath of the storm on the

main spire. The action of the wind is accurately represented by the scud which is swept along in one direction only. A tawny, lustreless sunbeam lights up a part of the belfry, every architectural and ornamental detail on which is rendered with admirable cleverness, delicacy, brilliancy, and skill. The dial, whereon the figures are picked out in white, by scratching through to the paper surface, must have called for infinite patience and care from the fiery poet. At the foot of the belfry rises, on massive pillars, a market-hall, quaintly barred with black shadows, with imbricated slates like fish-scales, and dormer windows with dove-cot buttresses. Brilliant rays of light sparkle unexpectedly between the sombre pillars, that seem to have been designed purposely to afford hiding-places to Gubettas or Homodaïs. This is a very picturesque arrangement, which would form a fine decorative motive. Delightful houses in the Spanish Gothic and in the Flemish styles fill the back of the square. It is easy to recognise in this architectural drawing the hand that wrote the chapter "A Bird's-eye View of Paris," in "Notre-Dame de Paris."

V

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "RUY BLAS" AT THE THÉÂTRE DE LA RENAISSANCE

NOVEMBER 12, 1838.

NEVER has any literary solemnity excited public interest so deeply, for it was not only the first performance of "Ruy Blas," it was also the first performance in the new theatre; and it was on that evening that was to be finally settled the question whether Frédérick would succeed in stripping off the hideous rags of Robert Macaire, which seemed to cling to his flesh like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. Strange indeed is the position of an actor who cannot be separated from his creation, and whose mask, having been kept on too long, has become a part of his features.

"Ruy Blas" has solved the problem. Robert Macaire is no more, and from the heap of rags has uprisen, like a god starting from the tomb, Frédérick, the real Frédérick, the one you are acquainted with, sombre, passionate, the strong, the grand Frédérick, who knows how to move with tears, to thunder in menace, who is endowed with the gifts of voice, glance, and gesture, the Frédérick of Faust, of Rochester, of

Richard Darlington, and of Gennaro, the greatest comedian, and the greatest tragedian of modern times. It is wondrous good fortune for dramatic art.

I wish all possible success to the new theatre, which has been fairly started on the road of art and progress, and which, I hope, will not have been called the Renaissance Theatre for nothing. There was a speech by Méry and a drama by Hugo. Excellent; so go on, but above all give us no prose. Give us verse, verse, and again verse. Prose should be left to the Boulevard shops. Employ poets, not mere playwrights, for there is no need of opening a new stall for the productions of these people, and it is only right that fancy, style, wit, and poesy should have one little corner in which they may come to the light in this vast France, which boasts of being the most intellectual country in the world; in this Paris of ours, which proclaims itself the brain of the universe, though I really do not know why. Surely eighteen theatres ought to be enough for melodrama and vaudeville.

VI

REVIVAL OF "RUY BLAS"

FEBRUARY 28, 1872.

As I had been present at the first performance of "Ruy Blas" at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, on the occasion of the opening of the house, there was for me, in this long promised revival, and apart from the interest it naturally excited, an undefinable, sad attraction.

In "Mary Tudor," Hoshua Farnaby, the jailer of the Tower, says to Gilbert: "Look here, Gilbert; when a man has become gray-haired, he should not review the opinions for which he fought formerly, or look at the women he made love to when he was twenty. Both the women and the opinions strike him as very ugly, very old, very mean, very toothless, very wrinkled, very stupid." This is no doubt true of opinions and women, but not of works of genius. They can stand being looked at again, for they possess immortal youth. The years, as they pass over the bronze or marble of which they are made, merely add the final polish and patina to them. "Ruy Blas" seemed to me as beautiful as the first time I saw it, if not more beautiful even.

In spite of the lapse of time I felt myself carried away, as when I was twenty, by the mighty rush of passion; I was desperately in love with the Queen, and with Ruy Blas I climbed over the high wall bristling with iron spikes in order to fetch her the little blue German flowers gathered at Coramanchel. Don Salluste, Satan turned grandee of Spain, filled me with the same sense of oppressive terror, and Zafari, the jolly Bohemian who had once been Don Cæsar de Bazan, excited in me the same impulsive sympathy. I experienced anew the fresh impressions of my youth, and the dormant Romanticism that is ever in me woke up again, ready to enter once more on "Hernani" battles; but of these there is no longer need. No one now questions Victor Hugo's title to be a dramatic poet, and he has compelled the most recalcitrant to admire him.

No first performance of a yet unknown work ever excited more ardent curiosity. I need not say that the interior of the theatre upset the mathematical axiom that the container must be larger than the contents, for, through one of those phenomena of compressibility of which the human frame is susceptible on such occasions, there were certainly more spectators than there were seats for them.

It might be supposed that the eagerness was due, not to literary attraction only, but also to political preoccupations. It is true that, though the poet ever was disdainful of success won by allusions, "Ruy Blas" does contain a number of lines which an opposition may turn to account against no matter what government, for they express truths that are always timely, — the commonplaces, as it were, of eternal justice.

Well, no sooner had the first few lines been spoken than all thoughts of the kind vanished. The poet had got hold of the public, and with one stroke of his mighty wings had borne it far from the realities of the moment into the lofty spheres of art. Not even was there felt that spirit of antagonism between two rival schools which, at the first performance, caused some anxiety to his admirers. The play was listened to with religious respect, as though it had been the "Cid," "Don Sancho of Aragon," or any other recognised masterpiece, criticism of which is no longer allowable.

There were very few survivors left of that earlier public which was present at the performance in the Théâtre de la Renaissance. Thirty-four years have elapsed since that night, and I looked in vain in the boxes for the faces that I had known of yore. I could

scarcely make out five or six, that smiled at each other from a distance, happy at meeting again at such a feast of poesy; they formed a public of posterity for "Ruy Blas."

It was Frédérick Lemaître who, as will be remembered, created the part of Ruy Blas, and before the curtain rose people wondered whether he would succeed in stripping off the hideous rags of Robert Macaire, which seemed to cling to his flesh like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. But Ruy Blas quickly overcame Robert Macaire. The effect, needless to say, was tremendous, and the way in which, in the third act, Ruy Blas crushes Don Salluste under his heel, as the Archangel crushes the Fiend, is yet fresh in the memory of all those who saw it.

Frédérick still lives, but his genius lacks power, or youth rather. The old lion is still capable of shaking his mane, and of drawing a deep roar from his chest; he can still drive out the ministers and slay Don Salluste, but he can no longer throw himself prone at the Queen's feet on the steps of the throne. Nevertheless, if "The Burgraves," a Titanic work worthy of Æschylus, were revived, there is no actor who could compare with Frédérick. What a magnificent Job,

what a superb Barbarossa he would make! How admirably he would play the part of the patriarchal bandit, or that of the phantom Emperor.

Of all Victor Hugo's dramatic works, "Ruy Blas" is one of those which I like best. Note that I say which I like best; for there are others that I admire just as much.

The component parts of the work fit into each other with an accuracy that does not allow the points of junction to be perceived, for the plot moves easily along, in spite of its being complicated and involved. The subject is one that excites the imagination most intensely, and which may be found in every youthful heart in the form of an unspoken longing, — to emerge suddenly from obscurity by a piece of good fortune that seems like magic, and to fly swiftly upwards towards ideal, radiant, sublime love; love in majesty and omnipotence, which is the nearest thing to being a god on earth — in a word, to be the lover of the Queen.

The intoxication, the bewilderment, the vertigo consequent on reaching such heights are mingled with constant apprehension of unperceived disaster. In the floor, which seems to conceal no snare, may suddenly

open a trap-door through which the victim will be precipitated into a darksome abyss. From a secret opening may perhaps emerge, silent, icy-cold, implacable as Hatred or Vengeance, the diabolical Don Salluste, who, putting his hand on the unfortunate man's shoulder, strips off him the skin of Don Cæsar de Bazan and leaves him in the presence of the Queen with naught but his lackey's livery. What a tragical, what a moving situation! To help — in spite of one's self, and without knowing what to do, driven by inexorable fate — to set the trap prepared by the demon for the adored angel, while one feels confusedly its formidable complications working in the gloom!

Every one of the characters is drawn and painted like a portrait by Velasquéz, with sov'ran mastery, power of colour, freedom of touch, and a grandeur in the attitudes and a feeling of the times that carry one away. How often I have seen that Marquis of Finlas at the Prado, at the Escorial, at Aranjuez, either him or some one of his race, in a frame with a coat of arms, rich, dressed in black, with eyes like live coals set in his deathly white face. Many an hour have I spent in silent contemplation of pallid Infantas,

of bloodless Queens, of dead women turned phantoms, having no other trace of life, in the silvery luminousness of the drawing-rooms and under the shimmering of pearls, than the carmine on their lips and the spots of rouge on their cheeks! The whole of picaresque Spain lives once more in the amazing character of Don Cæsar de Bazan, which is in Hugo's work what the sparkling Mercutio is in Shakespeare's. How elegant he is even in his rags, and how well he wears them! What loftiness of mind in poverty, and what terrific and philosophical forgetfulness of vanished prosperity! How loyal, scrupulous, and proud, amid all his disorders, that Count de Garofa, later de Villalcazar, the friend of Matalobos and Gulatembra! And Don Guritan, grotesque rival to Ruy Blas; what a fine type of old Spanish gallantry! He is Don Quixote come to Court, with the Queen for his Dulcinea de Toboso!

But why dwell longer on what is so well known? Rather let me draw attention to the fact that never was dramatic life managed with such sovereign ease, with such absolute power. A poet may express everything, from the most lyrical effusions of love to the minute details of etiquette, heraldry, and genealogy;

from the highest eloquence to the riskiest pleasantry, passing from the sublime to the grotesque without the least effort, and mingling every accent in the most magnificent language that was ever spoken on the stage. Molière's plain speaking, Corneille's grandeur, and Shakespeare's imagination, melted in the crucible of Hugo, amalgamate into a Corinthian bronze that is superior to all other metals.

Although an old critic is usually *laudator temporis acti*, and considers that comedies, tragedies, and dramas were better performed in the days of his youth, I am bound to say that the revival of "Ruy Blas" at the Odéon was superior, as regards acting, finish and setting, to the first performance, save and except so far as Frédérick is concerned, for he cannot be replaced by any one.

Lafontaine, in the part of Ruy Blas, neither sought nor avoided perilous remembrances, and gave what was in him: unexpected outbursts, cries that came from the heart, accents that were true in spite of incoherence and grandiloquence. In the scene in the first act, when he tells Zafari of his love for the Queen, his delivery was very good; he was magnificently violent and superbly angry in his famous invec-

tive against the ministers, and the declaration of love which follows was breathed with really well rendered timidity of adoration and passion, while at the end the lackey was implacable in the way he avenged himself upon the nobleman.

As for Geoffroy, he is the very ideal of the part. The poet could not have conceived in his imagination a more icy, more impassible Don Salluste; one more void of human feeling, more profound, more satanic, in a word, under the outward appearance of a nobleman. Every one of his words cut like an axe and made the back of one's neck creep. Alexander Muzon was far indeed from attaining such perfection.

The part of Don Cæsar de Bazan seems to call irresistibly for Mélingue: the escudero cloak has been slashed and cut into holes on purpose for him; the pummel of the shell-hilt rapier is made to his hand; the drooping feather is meant to flutter upon his beaver. Who is there that could, better than he, swagger round with triumphant mien, his cloak up his neck and his hose wrinkling down his legs? And all the sparkling nonsense, the happy hits, that flash across the sombre background of the drama like Roman candles against a dark sky! Mélingue had no difficulty

in making those who still remembered the original Don Cæsar forget Saint-Firmin.

Atala Beauchêne, who played the part of Marie de Neubourg at the Renaissance, was considered weak in it, in spite of her beauty. But there could be no more suave, charming, and poetic Marie de Neubourg than Sarah Bernhardt at the Odéon. What languid sadness is hers! what an air she has of an ill-mated dove that is stifling for want of freedom and love in the gloomy gilded cage wherein she is shut up by the mummified incarnation of etiquette, the camerara-mayor! Never has the gloomy, suffocating ennui of the Spanish Court been better rendered. How chaste her reserve, even when owning her love! How womanly her discretion! How truly the Queen in her always guards the woman who loves! How truly she is made to be worshipped, and how clearly the little silver-lace crown on top of her head makes her look like the Madonna of love!

Fabien showed us Don Guritan, the old fighting beau, in the light of a high-bred and attractive character. His costume, of a tender hue, braided all over and covered with ribbons, contrasted comically with the tall, thin, stiff, longitudinal figure, which recalled that of a young heron. Ridiculous as he looks, he

loves the Queen and would die for her. Ruy Blas was not mistaken in that.

Mlle. Broisat is the sweetest Casilda that could possibly lighten the gloom of the Spanish Court and counterbalance the soporific influence of a camerara-mayor. And while I am on the subject of the Duchess d'Albuquerque, let me say that Mlle. Ramelli, in her black bodice, is irritatingly truthful in her dragon's part; every time she pulls the thread to stay the flight of some fancy or other, one feels tempted, like the Queen, to box her ears soundly.

Mme. Lambquin assumed, without the least coquetry, the part of the hideous duenna, with pimples on her chin and grog-blossoms on her nose. She seems to have looked for her costume and the type she was to represent in Goya's *Caprichos*, among the wizards of the College of Bozozona, the *tias* of the Rastro, and the duennas with huge chaplets who, in church porches, ask you for alms, first for an old woman, and then for a young one.

VII

REVIVAL OF "MARION DELORME"

NOVEMBER 9, 1839.

I DESIRE to put on record the success which the revival of "Marion Delorme" is meeting with just now at the Comédie-Française. It is superfluous at this time of day to sing the praises of the play. A run of eighty nights and three successive editions are better than any panegyric. This beautiful drama unites in itself the passionate seriousness of the great Corneille and the mad spirit of Shakespeare's romantic comedies. It is infinitely varied in tone; most delightful and Castilian in its vivacity. How admirably all those handsome lords who merely pass through the play to flash their swords and exhibit their wit, speak the proudly cavalier tongue of the sixteenth century! How truly comic an accent there is in it! Pray, pray take Taillebras, Scaramouch, and Gracioso. Why, Scarron himself, the author of "Don Japhet of Armenia" and of "Jodelet," could not have dashed them off more freely and vividly. And Marion's tears! How limpidly they stream, divine pearls of repentance, over all those grimacing or dreadful faces! What a charming Mar-

quis is that naughty fellow Gaspard de Saverny! And what a manly, severe, foredoomed face is that of Didier, sprung from nothing! "Marion Delorme" is one of Hugo's plays to which one turns back with the most pleasure. It is a novel, a comedy, a drama, a poem, in which every one of the cords of the lyre is struck in turn.

VIII

REVIVAL OF "MARION DELORME"

DECEMBER 1, 1851.

LAST Friday "Marion Delorme" was revived at the Théâtre de la République. That great and beautiful drama, already consecrated by time, has become as classical as a tragi-comedy by Corneille or Rotrou, for all that it was so Romanticist at the time when it was first produced. Though still a living drama, it has taken its place in the gallery of masterpieces which the Théâtre-Français presents for study to the younger generations. It was listened to with religious respect both by those who were acquainted with it and by those who were not. It is scarcely possible to imagine an actress better fitted for the part of Marion Delorme, of the repentant courtesan, than Mlle. Judith. She

has the youth, the beauty, the intelligence, the passion, the tears, and the smiles it calls for. If, in some of the deeper and more pathetic passages she does not do so well as Mme. Dorval, on the other hand, she brings out other points in the part and lights it up differently.

Jouffroy does not play the part of Louis XIII, he lives it; he is Louis XIII in person, the king who reduced ennui to an art, almost to a form of voluptuousness, and who forgot to take his crown from the brow of Melancholy. It is impossible to be more lack-lustre, more gloomy, more dull, more regally overwhelmed with royal weariness as with a leaden cope lining the ermine mantle, the weight of which was felt by none more heavily than by that same pale Louis, not even by Philip II at the Escorial, or by Charles V at Saint Just.

Brindeau made the character of Saverny ironically eloquent, and Maillard reproduced satisfactorily the passionate, woe-begone, and foredoomed aspect of Didier, the type of all the Antonys.

IX

"LUCREZIA BORGIA" AT THE ODÉON

MARCH 13, 1843.

"LUCREZIA BORGIA" has been revived at the Odéon, and that gigantic drama, which reminds one more of Æschylus than of Shakespeare, has produced its customary effect. Mlle. Georges showed herself sublime in it, as usual, and never, since it was first created, has the small part of the Princess Negroni been interpreted more gracefully, with more beauty, wit, and youthfulness. It was Mlle. Volet who was charged to draw into the snares of the too vindictive Lucrezia Gennaro's over-trustful friends, and it will readily be believed that they did not have to be asked twice before they followed her.

Strange indeed is Lucrezia's fate! Celebrated by all the poets her contemporaries, sung by the divine Ariosto, who set her up as a model of all the virtues, she has a double reputation: to the poets she is an angel; to the chroniclers, a fiend. Which of these have lied? She was fair, and had the gentlest face imaginable. Lord Byron relates that he found in a library in Italy, I forget whether in Ravenna or Ferrara, a collection of

autograph letters of Lucrezia Borgia's, between the pages of which had been inserted a lock of her hair. The letters spoke of platonic love, of idealised tenderness; the hair was soft, pale, and silky, like the beams of an angel's halo.

The great poet abstracted a small portion of it, which he carried away and preserved carefully. Now that woman has become the type of Titanic wickedness, just as, thanks to Vergil's slanders, Dido, the most repellent, the most dried-up prude of her day, will live for ever as the type of love and passion.

X

"LUCREZIA BORGIA" AT THE PORTE-SAINT-MARTIN

FEBRUARY 7, 1870.

IN 1833 I was present at the first performance of "Lucrezia Borgia," a fact I have no intention of concealing with a view to making myself out younger than I am. I will even confess that I was a member of the deputation sent to Victor Hugo by the Romanticist school, which objected to fighting for a prose drama, a concession it looked upon as made to the bourgeois; for we fanatics, who may appear ridiculous to the

present generation, were proud of art and had a genuine love for the highest forms of poetry. The reading of the play, however, which produced a tremendous effect, swept away all scruples, and the hosts of "Hernani" pledged themselves to stand by "Lucrezia Borgia;" although, as it turned out, this was unnecessary, for the play scored a triumphant success.

So I have seen Gennaro played by Frédérick Lemaître, and Lucrezia interpreted by Mlle. Georges. You need not shudder; I am not going to take a mean advantage of my remembrances, and I shall not sing the praises of the past, like Horace's old man, *laudator temporis acti*, or Nestor, the good knight of Gerennia, who lauded the men of former days as being so much better and stronger than those of the present. Perhaps I am, after all, nothing more than an old Romanticist dolt, as Théodore de Banville used to say of himself, but as I should not like the fact to become too apparent, I shall avoid as much as I can any senile drivel.

The public that was present at the revival of "Lucrezia Borgia," new, so far as seeing it performed went, to the greater number, was filled with a very different spirit from that which inspired us in 1833, for times change and men with them. It was not the art ques-

tion which interested it most, but I tried to isolate myself from my noisy yet calmer surroundings, to put aside my former impressions, and to judge the play as if I were seeing it for the first time.

Well, after the lapse of so many years, filled with so many unforeseen events, such contrary doctrines and varied changes of taste, "Lucrezia Borgia" produced on me as great an effect as at the first performance, and indeed a greater effect. At that time, intoxicated with lyricism, mad about poetry, I appreciated less completely the drama itself and its scenic situations; now, it is precisely dramatic force and strong situations that distinguish the first prose play of the poet who wrote "Hernani" and "Marion Delorme." Powerfully effective as the drama is, it is also wonderfully simple in its construction. It consists of three leading situations, fully developed and forming admirable tableaux superbly drawn and painted, that resemble three colossal frescoes set in slender Renaissance architecture. They are grasped at a glance and the impression they make is ineffaceable: *Outrage upon Outrage — The Couple — Dead Drunk.* These are the titles, at once sinister and quaint, which the poet has inscribed upon cartouches with curving volutes, underneath these magical pictures

grim and sombre in their splendour. What can be finer than the scene upon the terrace of the Barberigo Palace in Venice, when Maffio Orsini, Beppo Loveretto, Don Apostolo Gazetta, Ascanio Petrucci, and Alofeno Villetozzo, whose families each and all mourn some murdered one, cast in the teeth of Lucrezia Borgia, whose mask they have torn off, every one of her crimes, and by way of crowning insult fling her name in her face? It is an astounding crescendo of insults. No poet, since Shakespeare's day, has sounded more powerfully the "hideous trump of curse." There is a reminiscence of the epic grandeur of Æschylus in that scene.

The Couple represents with terrifying truthfulness the private life of a pair of tigers. They have exactly the same treacherous gracefulness, the same velvety sneakiness, the same tremendous strength concealed by suppleness and softness of motion. As one watches the male and female prowling up and down, as though in an Indian jungle, within that palace filled with traps, snares, and oubliettes, in which all that is necessary is to rap on the wall to bring forth a cut-throat with his blade in his hand, or a cup-bearer bringing in vials of poison, one is involuntarily filled with secret terror. These

two huge felines, that have for a moment escaped from the menagerie of history, have a monstrous beauty of their own, the savage character of which has been wonderfully brought out by the poet.

When, after having in vain been all smiles and sweetness, and uttered hypocritical sighs, Lucrezia shows her claws and in her rage roars again in her natural voice, cold shivers run up and down one's back, and one dreads seeing the tigress spring from the stage into the auditorium, as at a performance of Van Amhy's or Caster's. She is defending her cub to the best of her ability against the stern, implacable ferocity of Don Alfonso of Ferrara, her fourth husband.

What shall I say of the tableau: *Dead Drunk?* — of the supper at the Princess Negroni's, an elegant Locusta in the service of the Borgias, who had the art of attracting the rose-crowned victims to these death feasts, and to smilingly present the poisoned cup to them? How sinister is the chant of the monks as it mingles with the refrains of the orgy, and how fully the spectator shares the terror of the guests when the great doors swing open and reveal five coffins in a row, standing out against the black hangings with the silver cloth cross upon them, and Lucrezia standing on the

threshold, her arms crossed, filled with satisfied pride at having so well wrought out her cowardly vengeance, which every Italian in the sixteenth century would have admired as a work of art! "You gave a ball in my honour in Venice; I pay you back with a supper in Ferrara," are words that superbly sum up the whole play.

The other and connecting scenes are carried out with masterly simplicity, without any little tricks, and go straight to their end like lanes that lead to open squares by the shortest cut. But at the corner of these lanes there always is a curiously traceried turret, a porch with statues, a balcony with interesting iron-work. Even in the least visible parts of the play art is ever present, as it was in the Italian cities of that day.

In my opinion,—and it is merely a question of stage machinery — some of these scenes ought not to be detached, as they are at present, and made into tableaux, but introduced by a simple change of drop-scene. The play would be benefited by this, and these scenes would not be rendered more important than they really are; but in France there exists a superstitious horror of such changes in view of the spectators, though Shakespeare has made large use of them.

At the first performance I came to the conclusion that the prose of the play had as much artistic value as the finest verse, because of its firmness, its cleanness, and the fact that it is brightened up by strong touches and endowed with rhythm in view of the conflict of dialogue, and does not need, in order to reach the spectator's ear, the brazen vases that were placed on the stage of antiquity. I am still, thirty-seven years later, of the same mind. No more magnificent language has ever been heard on the stage. A few of the younger generation affirm that it has aged. No doubt; aged like a painting by Titian or Giorgione, which time has covered with a golden veil, making the lights fairer, the tones warmer, and the waves of a yet more mysterious depth.

It is known that this terrible woman, whom her contemporaries thought charming, was fair. Lord Byron possessed a lock of Lucrezia's hair, which had been forgotten in a love letter, and that was the colour of ruddy gold. Mme. Marie Laurent has conformed to this tradition. It is not necessary to have hair black as ink in order to be terrible. Lionesses are tawny.

There is this difficulty in the part of Lucrezia, that her maternal love having to remain unconfessed, it

often assumes the appearance of love itself. Its accents deceive Gennaro; they deceive Giubetta; they deceive the Grand Duke of Ferrara, but they do not deceive the spectators. They are in the secret; they know full well that Gennaro is the son of Lucrezia and of that Giovanni Borgia who was cast into the Tiber by the man on horseback seen by the Ripetta boatman, and whose sombre story is told by Beppo Loveretto at the beginning of the play. This subtle distinction is the more difficult to maintain that Lucrezia indulges in no monologue for the purpose of stating what she knows better than any one else, that she makes use of Giubetta without confiding anything to him, and that she yields up her secret only in the supreme explosion at the end, when she cries to Gennaro, with the death-rattle in her throat, "I am thy mother!" This difference was delicately and thoughtfully rendered by the actress. She was very fine in the great curse scene, when she falls smitten to the earth by the anathema the avenging lips hurl at her, or rather by the overpowering grief arising from the thought that henceforth she will be despised and hated by Gennaro. Her wheedling ways with the Duke, in the second act, were perhaps a little bit overdone, and it would have been well not to

lay so much stress on her secret designs. When she beseeches Gennaro to drink the antidote, and he refuses, remarking that perhaps it is the real poison, she makes a superb gesture of unrecognised probity revolting against injustice. She howled the fierce ironies in the third act with amazing depth of satisfied hatred, and in the closing scene she proved both touching and pathetic, making one forget the poisoner and pity the mother.

Why did Taillade, who had to represent a young captain of fortune, an Italian of the days of the Borgias, crop his head quite close after the English fashion, so as to look like Kemble in the part of Hamlet? I cannot understand this strange fancy, which unjustifiably alters the appearance of the character. Taillade, having often been blamed for playing in too nervous, too jerky, too jumpy a way, now affects a cold and sober manner; he scarcely indulges in a gesture, and no longer allows himself to be carried away by the rush of the play. It is true that Shakespeare says to the players: "Do not saw the air too much with your hand," and that he forbids them "tear a passion to tatters, to very rags," but he also advises them thus: "Be not too tame neither; suit the action to the word, the word to the action." If Taillade, whose talent I

much appreciate, would let himself go more, he would be all the better. Gennaro, in spite of his mysterious destiny, ought to be more frank and confiding than he makes him.

Mélingue is the most admirable Don Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, that can be conceived. He has a lordly and princely mien, quite the port of a portrait by Bronzino; and when he says, "The name of Hercules has often been borne in our family," he looks worthy of bearing it himself. Under his slashed silk sleeve there plainly is concealed a muscular arm capable of handling the sword. He is a man of the kind the age brought forth: a bandit-hero, a tyrant, a lover of the arts, a gallant and courteous poisoner, a deep politician, and worthy of being admired by Machiavel.

XI

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "THE BURGRAVES" AT THE THÉÂTRE-FRANÇAIS

MARCH 13, 1843.

OF yore, on the edge of the cliffs that bristle on the banks of the Rhine, rose cloud-wrapped, inaccessible donjons inhabited by burgraves, bandit-noblemen, Homeric robbers, who took ransom from passers-by,

pillaged convoys, and then returned to their eyries with their booty held fast in their talons. Smashed open by assaults, broken down by time, cracked by the invasion of vegetation, the tall towers of the deserted strongholds are falling stone by stone into the stream, or menacingly overhang the abyss in monstrous fragments. The heroic bandits in their armour of plate have been succeeded by thieves and swindlers; cunning has replaced force, and it is the hotel-keepers who now rob travellers.

In his admirable "Letters from the Rhine," Victor Hugo, with his unequalled descriptive powers, took us through a number of the ancient feudal lairs, every part of which he is acquainted with — the guard-rooms, the cellars with their elliptical vaulting, the winding staircases, the secret passages cut in the thickness of the walls, the oubliettes, their floors strewn with dead men's bones, the cone-topped look-outs, hung on the crenellations like swallows' nests, — he showed us everything and led us through every room and hall, and into every story.

No doubt it was while he was exploring one of these donjons that the idea of "The Burgraves" occurred to the illustrious poet. First, he must have

reconstituted in his mind the ruined parts; set the fallen stones back in their places; fastened the chains to the drawbridge; restored the fallen floors; torn down the ivy and parasitical plants; replaced the stained-glass panes in their lead setting; cast an oak trunk or two in the gaping mouth of the fireplaces, placed here and there in the window recesses a few carved wood chairs. Then when he saw that everything was rearranged and set right in the lordly manor, the fancy must have seized him to recall its former inhabitants, for like the witch of Endor, a poet is able to call up ghosts and to make them speak. Hatto must have come first, then Magnus, his father, then Job, the grandsire, the circle widening and growing backwards through time. It is this vision of vanished years which Victor Hugo has realised and cast in magnificent verse, the result being the trilogy of "The Burgraves."

When the curtain rises and allows the spectators to look into the imaginary separated from the real by the dazzling line of fire called the footlights, there is seen the keep of Heppenheff, one of those lofty, scarped, inaccessible feudal strongholds that cling to the rock with talons of granite, clusters of towers

engaged one within the other, walls resembling cliffs to the point of deception, and of which those who have not visited the keeps of the Rhine may form some idea by looking at the ruins of Château-Gaillard, near les Andelys, on the banks of the Seine. Clouds rest upon the battlements, and the hawk in its swoop tears its wing against the spearheads of the sentries; the moats are abysses, in which foam far below in a bluish haze the boiling waters of a torrent, and it is courting dizziness to bend out of the narrow loopholes.

There is no communication with the outer air, not an opening in that stone panoply which the old burgrave Job the Accursed puts on over the iron panoply he never lays aside. Job the Accursed, Job the Excommunicated, is a sort of centenarian Goetz von Berlichingen, a Titan of the Rhine, who means to die as he has lived, without yielding obedience to any law or to any master; he has resolutely kicked down the imperial scaling-ladder set up against his walls, and to show that he is in open revolt against society he has hoisted a great black flag upon his highest tower.

The vast dilapidated hall, over which the dust of neglect is cast, where damp turns the stone-work green and the busy spider weaves its webs upon the broken

mouldings, is the lordly portrait gallery of the Keep of Heppenheff.

At the back, through the semicircular arches of a Romanesque gallery, blaze the blood-red, lowering hues of sunset. The lower story of the gallery consists of short, squat, stout, massive-looking pillars with fanciful capitals; the second, of lighter pillars set more closely together. Through the openings of the arches are seen in perspective the summits of the ramparts and of the other towers of the castle. Lights are already gleaming from the barbicans, whence come bursts of strident clarion blasts and noisy refrains of drinking-songs. Hatto, the youngest and the most wicked of the burgraves, is feasting with his companions. The revel, begun in the morning, looks like lasting a good deal longer, for the guests are not inclined to cut their enjoyment short. Amid the insolently joyous resonance of the revel is heard at times the sinister sound of heavy steps and of leaves brushed aside. It is the slaves returning from work, driven by a soldier, whip in hand.

Assuredly if ever a man might think himself safe within his den, Count Job may do so. The portcullis is down, the drawbridge up; the archers are watch-

ing at their posts: the Count's chamber, its door studded with huge nails, and locks with complex secret wards, is itself a fortress within the outer fortress; the slaves are securely ironed; the prisons are of unknown depth and never yield up their prey. What, then, has the old Prometheus to fear on this rock? Naught, save a vulture, sent by Jupiter, swooping down from the heavens.

Yet a foe has managed to penetrate within the well defended manor, in spite of ramparts and sentries. Do you see that old, worn woman, sad beyond all expression, with the cold, gloomy look of a spectre, her two heels sounding on the stone pavement as she walks like the heels of the Commander, her harsh, strange name, her sinister, mysterious ways? She is Hatred and Vengeance; she is Guanhumara, a poor slave who has been bought and sold a score of times, who has tugged at the boats that ply between Ostia and Rome, and who, ever changing masters and climes, has lived for sixty years a death in life. In the course of her many sufferings and of her wandering existence, she has learned wondrous secrets; terrifying tigers even, she has gathered in the mighty forests of Ind powerful herbs that bestow life or in-

flict death; during the long Polar nights, when the stars shine in the heavens for six months at a time she has meditated upon the secret properties of stars and philters, she has conversed with the spirits of darkness, and slowly matured her plan of vengeance, a plan that Satan himself could not improve upon. She wanders through the castle, every nook and recess of which she is acquainted with, every subterranean passage in which she has explored; for, in return for the surprising cures she has worked, she is allowed a certain amount of liberty. In the breasts of her companions in misfortune, she inspires vague dread and superstitious terror, and ever as she walks there is a great void around her. Now while she crouches, surly, silent, and sombre, in a corner, the prisoners are talking together of the mysteries of the keep, and whisper among themselves words the very echo of which terrifies them.

Guanhumara has been seen in the graveyard, her sleeves rolled up, preparing a horrid mixture with bones of the dead, the while muttering a dread incantation. A light has been seen glimmering in the window with the torn iron bars, that looks out upon the abyss, and down which a trace of blood goes to the waters of the

torrent. It is a window that lights a cellar the entrance to which is now unknown. In that mysterious recess dwells a phantom.

"Dread and mysterious are the times we live in; filled with strange events. Everything is tottering and falling into ruin. Violence, murder, and pillage rage unchecked. It was not so in the days of Barbarossa. Ah! were he only alive now, he would know how to punish the insolent burgraves. — But he is not dead for ever, says one of the captives. There is a prediction that runs thus: 'Twice shall Barbarossa be believed dead, and twice shall he come to life again.' Count Max Edmund saw him near Lautern, in a cave in the Taurus, above which swoops round unceasingly a whirling flock of crows. He was seated on a brazen chair; his long white eyelashes came down to his cheeks, and his beard, once ruddy gold, now snow-white, went three times round the table on which he was leaning. When Count Max Edmund approached, Barbarossa opened his eyes and asked if the crows had flown away. 'No, Sire,' answered the Count; and the phantom-Emperor went to sleep again. — All that is but a piece of folly, a yarn, an old wife's tale, mere nonsense. Barbarossa was drowned in the Cydnus, in sight of the whole

army. — His body was never found, though. — Who knows? says another one of the company, less sceptical than his comrades. The prophecy has come true once; why should it not come true a second time? I saw long ago, in the hospital at Prague, a Dalmatian nobleman called Sfrondati, who was shut up as being insane, and who told the following story: During his youth, he was a squire in the household of Barbarossa's father, who, dreading the predictions that had been made at the boy's birth, had intrusted him to another son, a bastard he had had by a girl of noble rank, to be brought up under the name of Donato. Duke Frederick had concealed his real rank from the bastard, lest the latter's ambition should be aroused, and when he confided his legitimate son to him, he merely said: 'This is your brother.' When Donato was twenty, the two brothers quarrelled about a Corsican maid with whom they were both in love. The elder brother thought he had been treacherously dealt with, and slew the younger, as well as Sfrondati; at least he believed he had killed them. On the banks of a torrent, shepherds picked up two blood-covered bodies, stripped naked, which had been cast up by the waters. They were those of Sfrondati and Donato, who were still

alive; they were restored to health, and Sfrondati hastened to take Donato back to his father. The affair was hushed up; Fosco disappeared and fled to Brittany, from which he did not return till very many years later. As for Sfrondati, his mind had given way, and he was sensible at rare intervals only. Duke Frederick, desirous of keeping the affair quiet, had him shut up. No one knew what had become of the Corsican girl, who had been sold to bandits or corsairs. When he was on his death-bed Frederick sent for his son and made him swear on the cross not to seek to be avenged upon his brother before the latter was a hundred years old; that is, never. No doubt Fosco had died without being aware that his father Otho was Duke Frederick, and his brother Donato the Emperor Barbarossa."

Such, roughly, is the tenor of the conversation between the slaves, merchants, citizens, and soldiers; each man putting in a word and a rime with a skill and in an unexpected way characteristic of the conversations Victor Hugo writes down, and which in the modern drama take the place filled by the chorus in the tragedy of antiquity.

When the captives have finished their stories, the soldier-keeper cracks his whip and drives them before

him, for my lord Hatto and his company are coming to visit this portion of the castle, and their eyes must not be shocked by the sight of these wretches.

It is not often that the young burgraves venture in this direction, for it is here that Magnus and Job have made their den. The darksome stair leads to the rooms they inhabit. Within there, Job sits in state under a dais of gold brocade, with his son Magnus at his side holding his lance. They remain silent and motionless for months at a time, sunk in deep thought. They keep thinking of their exploits, of their crimes, it may be, for at bottom they are downright bandits, and if they are free from the effeminate vices of decadent periods, they have their full share of the ferocious roughness and the brutal coarseness of primitive times. They are men of iron, wearing naught but iron; their dressing-gown is a coat of mail; they live in their panoplies, and as they move about the steel clinks and clashes. Hatto and his friends, on the other hand, find it more convenient to dress in silks and velvets, to spend their lives in prolonged feasting, to crown themselves with flowers, to indulge in amorous dalliance with their beauteous slaves, and to leave the rough work to be done by subordinate brig-

ands, who have been trained like dogs or falcons to retrieve the prey. They prefer the clinking of glasses to the clash of swords, and perhaps, notwithstanding their heroic ancestors, they are not far wrong.

The captives having withdrawn, there comes on the scene a pallid, white-clad figure. Is she a vision? An angel strayed into this tiger-cat's den? She leans with one hand upon her maid, and rests the other upon the arm of the free archer Otbert, a handsome young fellow of twenty who loves her and is loved by her. She sits down, or lets herself fall, rather, in an arm-chair by the richly coloured stained-glass window, which she has opened in order to look out over the country-side; for the last time, it may be, for she is dying of consumption. The tomb yearns for her lovely frame, and the angels are calling her pure and gentle soul. Millevoye made himself famous by writing a few lines of verse on this subject, but these disappear in the presence of this scene between Regina and Otbert as vanishes the moon's pale light before the rays of the sun. No poetry more ravishing, more tender, more sad, more amorously scented with the perfumes that air exhales from its urn, ever caressed a human ear. Otbert's love expresses itself in lyrical effusions of in-

comparable ardour and tenderness. "Thou shalt live!" he exclaims in passionate accents of love, when the young girl in her dismay utters a cry of sublime despair, as she feels that life is leaving her and that she is too much loved to die just yet.

Otbert goes to Guanhumara, for does she not hold the keys of life and death in her hands? Guanhumara cannot refuse to grant him life for Regina. Besides, there exists some mysterious bond between Otbert and the sinister hag. He was stolen by her when a child, and she has brought him up for the fulfilment of a formidable and terrible project. Indeed, not to keep the reader in suspense, I shall say at once that Otbert is none else than George, a child born to Job in his old age, when he was past fourscore, like the true patriarch he is. The devilish old wretch seized the child when it was playing on the sward, and bore it away concealed in her rags. She has brought him up with a horrible purpose of murder and vengeance, for she means to punish fratricide by parricide. Of course, if it were merely a matter of killing Job, in whom the reader has already recognised the assassin of Donato, there would be no difficulty about it, for Guanhumara has at her disposal a whole pharmacy of poisons: hen-

bane, euphorbia, and the juices of the manchineel and the upas-tree. But that sort of thing would be too mild, too simple, and not Corsican enough.

Otbert says to her, "Can you save Regina's life?" —"I can; but what do I care whether she dies?" —"As for me, I would buy her life back at the price of my soul, if Satan would have it." —"Is your mind quite made up? Then look at this vial. Let Regina drink one drop of its contents every night, and she will live. But if you want me to give it you, you must swear to slay, when I will, where I will, whom I will, without pity or mercy, — to slay like an assassin or an executioner." —"I swear I shall do so."

The bargain is struck, and Guanhumara draws from her sash a small vial. That blackish liquor is the quintessence of life, health, and bloom. Really, Otbert is not paying too high a price for it.

A faint puff of wind again bears in the sound of songs and clarions. It is Hatto advancing, followed by his joyous company, glasses in hands, roses on heads. Their conversation is exceedingly animated, for the two barrels of scarlet wine annually paid by the town of Bingen to Count Hatto have been pretty freely broached. Every man is telling of his exploits, and of

his successes with the fair — the telling takes time. The one boasts of having sacked a place, another of having forsworn himself on the Holy Gospels, and numerous other peccadilloes of the sort. But while these fellows are chattering, the donjon door has opened, and a sight meets the gaze. First comes Magnus, dressed in buff and steel, with a great wolf-skin thrown over his shoulders so that the head and mouth form a helmet. His hair and beard are streaked with gray, and he leans upon a huge Scottish pole-axe; though aged, he is plainly of colossal strength and his muscles are unconquered. On the upper step stands another figure, older, bald-headed, with veins prominent on the temples, and a long white beard falling down like a cascade upon a chest as powerful as that of Michael Angelo's Moses. It is Job, formerly known as Fosco. By his side stand Otbert and a squire bearing the red and black banner.

Hatto's companions are too much engaged with their own sayings and doings to notice the arrival of Job and Magnus, who preserve granite-like silence until one of the guests boasts of having forsworn himself. Then Magnus speaks, and breaks out into one of those magnificent apostrophes, common in Victor Hugo's work,

upon old German loyalty, on the difference between the oaths sworn and the clothes worn of yore and the oaths sworn and the clothes worn at present. Formerly all were steel, now they are nothing but silk and imitation; neither oaths nor clothes endure.

The young burgraves pay but scant heed to the speech, for they are well used to the Homeric allocutions of their grand-parents. The young Count Lupus starts a song: —

"Cold is the winter, fierce the blast;
On mountain tops the snow is alling;
But let us love, for what care we?
For what care we? So let us love.

"Myself I 'm damned; my mother 's dead;
The priest is ever at me preaching;
But let us love, for what care we?
For what care we? So let us love.

"Satan himself at my door knocks,
Outside with all his friends he 's waiting;
But let us love, for what care we?
For what care we? So let us love."

While Lupus is singing, the others, bending out of the windows, are throwing stones at an old mendicant who appears to be begging a night's refuge. "What!"

cries Magnus, emerging from his torpor, "is that the way to receive a mendicant who begs, a guest sent by God himself? In my day we too were crazy-headed, we too were fond of prolonged repasts and songs, but when a poor wretch came along, cold and hungry, a helmet was filled with money and a cup with wine, and they were both sent out to the old man, who went on his way rejoicing, while the orgy proceeded apace, free from remorse and care." — "Silence! young man," says to Magnus the centenarian burgrave. "In my day, when we sang louder than even you, and when we feasted round a mighty board on which were served, upon golden platters, oxen roasted whole, if a beggar came to the castle gates, we proceeded forth to meet him, the trumpets sounded, and the old man was given the seat of honour. Stand back! ye children! Squires, go and fetch the man. And you, trumpeters, sound a blast as for a king!"

Job's orders are carried out, and soon appears in the redness of the sunset, framed in within an arch of the gallery at the head of the stairs, a pilgrim with torn mantle, dusty sandals, and a beard that falls to his waist. The trumpets send out a second blast, and the curtain falls upon this tableau, one of the grandest,

one of the most epic, ever seen on the stage, and to which there is no parallel for sublimity of conception and execution save the insult scene in "Lucrezia Borgia."

At the beginning of the second part, the old mendicant delivers one of those beautiful poetic monologues in which Victor Hugo sums up, in some threescore lines, the condition of a country and the character of an age. He excels in the making of these bird's-eye views, in which are represented in distinct and real forms the whole of the events of a whole century. When one has reached his topmost thought one's head turns with vertigo, as it does at the top of a cathedral spire. It is a maze of pillars, buttresses, counterforts, a complication which at once astounds and drives one to despair. To emerge from such a labyrinth, one must be at the least a Charlemagne, a Charles the Fifth, or a Barbarossa. And indeed the mendicant, received with royal honours by Job, is Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in person. This oration on transcendental politics, couched in verse of Corneillian beauty, is joyously broken in upon by the entrance of Regina, the bloom of health on her cheeks, her eyes shining with moist light, her lips wreathed with smiles. Guanhumara's

philter has worked, and the pallid girl, so white, so translucent that she might have served for the alabaster statue that was to be put on her tomb, has suddenly returned to life and happiness, recalled by the sov'ran drugs of the old witch.

Otbert is so radiant with happiness that he has almost forgotten the dread condition imposed by Guanhumara. But as she has kept her promise so must he keep his; else, by means of a second philter, the hag may plunge back into the gloom of the tomb the smiling face she has just snatched from it.

As for Job, he is supremely happy, for he has not been so blind, as he sat in his great ancestral chair, that he did not note the glances exchanged between Otbert and Regina, and their hearts speaking in their smiles. He sees that the young couple love each other, and he resolves to unite them in marriage. Besides, a secret sympathy draws him to Otbert; the young fellow's clean, proud brow and firm look please and delight him. Otbert looks just as he, Job, looked when he was twenty, as his son George, stolen in early childhood, would look now, had he not been sacrificed by the Jews upon one of their sabbath feasts. Otbert has no idea who were his father and mother, but that does not matter in the

least, for is not he, Job, himself a Count's bastard and the son of his own works? The difficulty in the way is that Regina is betrothed to Hatto. So time must be gained. Otbert and Regina shall flee by a secret postern of which Job hands them the keys, and the old man will take charge of the rest. The lovers are ready to flee, their eyes filled with joy and a heaven of happiness in their hearts; but the fiend is there, in the shadow, sneering and gnashing its teeth; Guanhumara, clinging in a dark corner as clings a bat with the claws on its wings, has heard every word, and goes to inform Hatto that Otbert is carrying off his bride. Hatto dashes in, raging with fury. Otbert pours out his contempt for him, challenges and insults him. Hatto, however, kicks away his glove, taunting him with being an impostor, a slave and the son of a slave. "You are not Otbert the archer; you are called Yorghi Spardacelli. I shall have you driven out with whips by my kennel grooms. I will not fight with you. If any one of these lords chooses to take your part, then I accept a duel with him on the spot, in this very place, with any weapon, with two daggers and bared breasts." The mendicant, who has watched the scene with suppressed indignation, calls out, "I shall be Otbert's champion!" — "This is

buffoonery! After the slave we tumble on the mendicant. Who are you that you dare put yourself forward?" — "I am the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and here is the cross of Charlemagne!"

This sudden revelation fills the whole assembly with terror.

"Barbarossa," says Magnus; "if you be indeed he, I shall soon recognise it. Let me see your arm. It is true; there is the mark of the triangular steel with which my father branded you. My lords, I declare that this is in very truth the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa."

The Emperor, his identity being established, breaks out into the most violent reproaches; he takes each burgrave to task, and tells him plainly what he is, with tempestuous, terrible eloquence, thunders and blasts that recall the wrath of the heroes of the Edda. The boldest tremble and bow their heads as they listen to the lion-like roars uttered by the old Emperor, indignant at so much cowardice, treason, and rapine. Alone Magnus remains head up, for his hatred is storming louder than Barbarossa's wrath even. The burgraves, emboldened by his example, begin to close in upon Frederick in an ever narrowing and more threatening ring. The giant is on the point of smashing the Emperor's sword into

flinders with his huge pole-axe, when Job the Accursed, who so far has taken no sides in the quarrel, draws near Magnus, puts his hand on his shoulder and says, as he sinks on one knee: "Frederick is right; he alone can save Germany. Let us yield."

Barbarossa, once more master of the situation, settles everything as he pleases, gives orders, sends some of the burgraves to the frontiers, condemns others to restore what they have seized upon, sets the captives free, and loads with the chains these are relieved of, the guiltiest among the burgraves. "And now, Fosco, go and wait for me in the place to which you repair every night," whispers Barbarossa to the old burgrave, who remains thunderstruck, for no one nowadays calls him by that name, — all those that ever knew it lying within the tomb.

In the third part the scene is the secret cellar, a terrifying and lugubrious place, with troublous echoes, and depths full of darkness. Through an opening grated with bars, three of which are twisted and partially pulled out, streams in a pale moonbeam that casts on the opposite wall a shroud-white mark. Job is seated, leaning on a large stone, by a small, flickering lamp that sputters in the damp, and merely serves to

make the blackness more intense. He is mourning over his fall; for he, demi-god of the Rhine, inflexible rebel, old mountain-eagle, has at last been vanquished. He recalls all the events of his life; he thinks of Donato, of Ginevra, of George, his lost son, of his incessant remorse and despair. To his sombre lamentations the echo replies obstinately, "Cain!" The echo is Guanhumara, who slowly comes forward, quietly terrible, for her vengeance is assured. She surges up in front of the burgrave, who, for the first time in his long life, shudders as he sees her. She makes herself known to him in a short, broken tale, in the course of which she briefly recapitulates the circumstances of the crime that was perpetrated within the secret cell. "And now, listen: your son George still lives. I it was who stole him away and bred him up to serve my vengeance. The son shall slay the father; a parricide for a fratricide is surely fair. George is Otbert; I have made a bargain with him: I recalled Regina to life on condition that he should put to death the victim I would point out. The life I restored to Regina I can take back, and this makes me sure Otbert's resolve will remain firm." — "And Otbert knows that he is about to slay his father?" —

"No; remain veiled; that is the only favour I grant you."

Staggering steps are heard in the depths of the underground room; it is Otbert coming, dismayed, stumbling, to fulfil his fatal promise. Then occurs an admirable scene in which hearts are kept on the rack and tortured, and which compels the driest eyes to shed tears. Never has any one made paternal love speak as here has done the author of "Autumn Leaves," "Notre-Dame de Paris," and "Lights and Shadows." Job refuses to die before he has embraced his boy; he pulls off his veil, throws himself into the arms of Otbert, who is himself torn by terrible forebodings, and while he swears to him that he is not his father, lavishes on him the most fatherly caresses. "Slay me; you may not allow your Regina to die. Besides, you think I am to be venerated, but I am a guilty man, a Satan. Be the avenging angel; strike without fear; I slew my own brother!" Still, Otbert, notwithstanding Job's eager entreaties, hesitates to perform the functions of executioner.

Guanhumara, seeing that his purpose is wavering, approaches and says: "Regina cannot wait longer than fifteen minutes." Otbert, beside himself, springs

forward knife in hand, but his arm is seized by Barbarossa, who suddenly emerges from the shadow, and says: "Ginevra, your vengeance would be useless. Donato is not dead, for I am he. Fosco, when you held me suspended over the abyss, you whispered in my ear words that no other living soul could hear: 'The tomb for thee; and hell for me!'" Fosco falls at his feet moaning for pity and forgiveness. Barbarossa raises him and presses him to his heart.

Guanhumara, or Ginevra rather, now disarmed, fully resuscitates Otbert's betrothed, and as her life's purpose is gone for ever, she swallows the contents of a small vial and falls down struck suddenly dead by the poison. And she is right; for what doth it advantage her, when a woman has become old and repulsive, to find again the lover she adored when she was twenty? What is the use of replacing a lovely phantom, a remembrance instinct with grace and bloom by a hideous reality?

This summary, which I have made with all the respect due to a great poet's work, is, though long, yet very incomplete. I should have liked, but it was an effort beyond my powers, to have reproduced some traits of these grim giant figures, whose violent forms,

terrible motions, and gait of angered lions, recall the illustrations drawn by the famous German painter Cornelius for the story of the Nibelungen. It is even doubtful whether I am capable of praising as it deserves the firm, clean, robust, familiar, yet grandiose versification that betrays the sovereign poet, as Dante hath it. At every instant one comes upon magnificent lines that bear one upward into the highest realms of poetry as with the swift rush of eagle's wings. It is marked by a variety of tone, an ease of rhythm, a facility in passing from the tender to the terrible, from the sweetest of smiles to the deepest terror, such as no other writer has ever possessed to a similar extent.

On this occasion, the public proved worthy of the masterpiece that was being performed before it. It listened, with the respect that beseems the inhabitants of the modern Athens, to the work of its greatest poet, not interrupting the action on account of risky detail or comparative oddity. And indeed never had such an assemblage met together to listen to a man's work. Everything that Paris, the brain of the world, holds in the way of learning, intelligence, passion, celebrity, and fame was met there. Literature, arts, the drama, politics, banking, fashion, beauty, every form of aristocracy,

were represented. Every box contained at least one renowned guest. Just at this time there is no one but Victor Hugo who can excite to such an extent public attention and curiosity. Whether people are favourable or hostile to him, they feel compelled to make themselves acquainted with his works. A drama from his pen is always an event, and affords food for discussion; he alone can make literary quarrels take the place of political debates.

It would be very easy, no doubt, — and there will be plenty of critics to undertake the task, — to fall foul of the poet on account of some detail, an entrance or an exit, but that matters little; it is mediocre minds that invariably excel in such petty fault-finding. For my part, I like the shocking beauties well enough, and I am quite willing to put up with a little oddity, barbarism, and bad taste, even, if these lead me on to certain unexpected and superb lines that make every true poet prick up his ears as the blare of bugles makes the war-horse do. Victor Hugo possesses one quality, the greatest and the least often met with in art: power. Whatever he touches acquires vigour, energy, and solidity. Under his mighty hands contours come out sharply defined; there is nothing vague,

nothing soft, nothing left to chance. He has the violence and harshness of style characteristic of Michael Angelo; his is a virile genius, — for genius has sex: Raphael and Racine were feminine geniuses; Corneille a manly one. No one comes so close to the grim grandeur of Æschylus; there are tirades in Job's part that would not be out of place in "Prometheus Bound." Guanhumara's imprecations, when she calls all nature to witness her oath of vengeance, constitute one of the finest passages in our literature; they are filled with the breadth and the soaring poetry of the tragedy of antiquity, which is a very different thing from the classical tragedy:

"O ye mighty heavens! O ye sacred depths!
Sombre serenity of the azure vault!
Light so mournful in thy majesty!
And thou, which in life's exile I ne'er have dropped,
My chain's worn link and comrade true,
I call ye all to witness now! Ye walls, ye citadels,

"Ye oaks, cool shade on travellers all bestowing,
My words ye hear! By this avenging steel shall fall
Fosco, baron of the woods, the rocks, the plains,
Sombre as thou, O night, aged as you, ye giant oaks!"

What marvellous power was needed thus to evoke the whole of a vanished time that has melted away

into the night of the doubtful past, to reconstruct a world of granite inhabited by giants of brass, to rebuild stone by stone, as patiently as a mediæval architect might have done, the inaccessible and formidable keep, with its walls pierced by the windings of darksome passages, its cellars full of mystery and terror, its old family portraits, its panoplies that give out strange sounds when the breeze rustles over them, and which seem to be still inspired by the spirits of those they protected! What power of realisation was needed to mingle thus the phantoms of legend and natural beings, and to put into imperial and Homeric mouths speeches worthy of them! Hugo alone could at this day maintain the epic tone, the lyric flight throughout three acts.

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF POETRY

IT is claimed nowadays that it is the easiest thing in the world to write verse; that everybody writes verse, and very fair verse at that; that every schoolboy has composed a volume of Melodies, or Harmonies, or Desolations, or Revelations, or Preludes, or Essays, or other Miscellanea that are more or less insipid. It would be just as true to say that everybody is clever, which is another statement very generally heard, and which explains why it is that one reads and hears nothing but inanities.

It is not easy to write verse. There are uncommonly clever, uncommonly learned people, or to use the slang of the day, great hearts and great stylists, who have never succeeded in turning out properly a distich or a quatrain. In addition to a flow of ideas, a knowledge of the language, and the gift of imagination, there is needed a certain inward sense, a secret tendency, something which cannot be acquired and which is part of the individual's own temperament and idiosyncrasy.

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF POETRY

Science always ends by opening the gates of its sanctuary to whomsoever knocks at them often enough, but poetry, music, and painting are of a prouder disposition and yield to picked minds only. I do not mean that a man can become a great artist without working, but I do mean that close study, which will make a scholar of a man, will not suffice to make an artist of him.

That is why arts are superior to sciences; they require, in addition to the knowledge acquired by study, a natural gift, a sort of instinctive intuition that nothing on earth can take the place of, and which is not to be found in any academy or market. As a general rule, I have no great opinion of scientists; but I feel the deepest veneration for a real artist; I admire him as I would admire a beautiful woman or a happy man. Genius, beauty, happiness, a radiant trinity, magnificent gifts which God alone can bestow, which are beyond the generosity of kings and which the most persistent efforts of human will fail to acquire.

A truth which prose-writers in vain endeavour to conceal under the Oriental splendour of their style is that they are unable to write verse. The poet, on the contrary, can write in prose whenever he chooses to condescend to such a job, and he turns it out in a won-

drously wrought out perfection that no prose writer can approach. A singer can speak, but an orator cannot sing. Birds both fly and walk; horses, however spirited and proud their gait, can run only, and the gallop of the finest English race-horse does not come up to an eagle's flight. The poet's double nature partakes of that of the hippogriff; there is no creature on earth or under heaven that can surpass him in running or in flight; the spread of his pinions is greater and his flight through the azure ether more powerful than that of the condor or the roc of fable, while his foot, lighter treading than even the light-footed Camilla's, scarce causes the blades of grass to bend.

In proof of this, I name an illustrious name, a name famous and admitted to be so by all alike, the name of the patriarch of modern literature, that of Chateaubriand. Unquestionably, if ever any man on earth was endowed with the gifts of epic grandeur, of movement, of warmth, of passion, of splendour, of mighty imagery, and of all the lofty poetic attributes, that man is the author of "The Martyrs," of "Atala," and of "René." Never did a prose writer bear closer resemblance to a poet, and as one reads the glorious pages of "The Genius of Christianity," involuntarily the thought occurs

that they would be easy to turn into beautiful verse; all they lack is rime.

Writers of newspaper articles and utilitarian bathos, and other small-minded men, who believe themselves to be accurate and judicious because they are sterile and colourless, unjustly run poets down. Whenever it pleases the poets to do so, they can compose newspaper paragraphs far superior in range and style to anything the aforesaid gentlemen have produced of most astounding; they can write on politics without having recourse to the rhetorical figures that alone form the eloquence of these would-be Montesquieus.

Poets are fit to do other things besides riming in verse, although I fail to see what better a man can do than write good verse. The prose of these fellows is not equal to theirs, and the whole pack of scribblers put together could not turn out a single one of the poets' strophes; their contempt is too closely akin to that of the fox that had lost its tail. And really I do not see any other explanation of the bitterness of critics towards poets.

It is true that a grand, broad style, flowing along like one of the mighty American streams bearing flowery islets upon its slow and harmonious current, is so like

poetry that it may well be mistaken for it. The waves of limpid, sonorous sentences make one think of the divine words that abounded in Homer's mouth, as André Chénier, the Greek poet, says. The periods are metrical and cadenced, with suitable rests and falls; they are almost blank verse. But to be quite verse, for the book to be quite a poem and the speech a song, rime alone is still wanted. Nothing, a mere nothing; three letters, two even, at the end of each line! Not much, is it? Barthélemy, separated from his Siamese twin Méry, writes three hundred lines of verse a week; if he were asked, he would just as readily write six hundred.

Yet Chateaubriand, with all his Biblical, Homeric, *chivalric*, and royal talent, has never been able to join on properly these three unfortunate letters to the end of his sentences, and has tried in vain to add that barb to the epic javelins he shoots from his silver bow, like unto that of Apollo Smintheus. Chateaubriand has, *proh pudor!* written badly rimed verse, hard, flabby, prosaic, inexact, grandiloquent, pretentiously artless, verse worthy of a provincial academy!

In many places his tragedy, "Moses," recalls Baour-Lormian's "Omasis" and Ducis' "Abufar," and not-

withstanding the Oriental profusion of camels, gazelles, and palms, is Biblical in name only. Verse is to Chateaubriand what sun spots are to the sun; the sun is none the less the sun and Chateaubriand Chateaubriand. Yet the spots are spots and bad verse is bad verse, even if Phœbus or God Himself had written it; so that I believe it may be said, with all due respect to his splendid renown and his mighty talent, that Chateaubriand, the great poetic prose-writer, is an execrable and ridiculous poet.

Jules Janin, frightfully wasteful though he is of his talent, and none the less one of the most distinguished literary men of the day, has been more fortunate, or else more prudent, than Chateaubriand. He has never been able to write verse; at least I am unacquainted with a single line of verse from his pen. When he needed a few stanzas for one of his novels, he simply asked his friends for them: Frédéric Soulié, the dramatist, or Barbier, the writer of iambics. Yet Jules Janin, whose prose is flowing, rhythmical, coloured, diapered with images, seems to have every requisite of a poet, but the pearls he scatters freely are not pierced and cannot be strung together on rhythm's golden thread.

George Sand, the hermaphroditic writer whose novels are so highly poetical, introduced into "Lelia," which is a grand ode, a hymn entitled *Inno Ebrioso*, which, in less pretentious language, means "Drinking Song." This hymn, or song, as the reader wills, is simply detestable. It is attributed by some to Gustave Planche, but this is merely begging the question, for Gustave Planche, in spite of his characteristic dryness and severity, is a distinguished writer of prose and a critic of very fair taste, and knows better than any one how bad verse is not written, even if he does not know how good verse is written. Every one remembers, too, what happened when the great mysticist, Edgar Quinet, the singer of "Ahasuerus," took to riming in order to make his aureole complete.

Examples to the contrary are very numerous. Hugo, the poet who has written "Odes and Ballads," "The Orientals," "Hernani," and "Marion Delorme," the man who has come nearest to Corneille and who is unquestionably the greatest of French lyrical poets, writes a prose that is not less beautiful than his verse, sculptural and marked by firmness and vigour unsurpassed by any other writer; he passes with equal facility from the lyre to the pen, from the pen to the lyre. His

prose sentences are as fine as his verse, due allowance being made for the material with which he works, for diamond must always be superior to crystal. Diamond scratches crystal, while crystal cannot make an impression on diamond, although it is apparently of as fine a water, as limpid, and sparkling with equal beauty.

Lamartine writes eloquently and easily in prose; the author of "Joseph Delorme" and "Consolations" is known for his carefully wrought out and delicately trenchant sentences. Alfred de Vigny wrote "Cinq-Mars," which is quite as good as "Eloa." Musset's prose comedies exhibit exactly the same freedom, insolent elegance, and witty fancifulness which are met with in his "Tales of Spain and Italy."

I might carry this comparison a good deal farther and quote many another name, but I fancy these are sufficient, and more than sufficient.

Even granting that fine prose is as good as fine verse, which I deny, is the overcoming of difficulties not to count for anything? I am well aware that there are plenty of people who claim that difficulties should not be taken into account; yet what is art, if it be not the means of overcoming the obstacles nature puts in the way of the crystallisation of thought? And if it is

easy to overcome obstacles, what becomes of merit and glory? So I claim for the poet the highest throne in the Olympus of the superiorities of human thought. An absolute poet who should reach the most inaccessible degree of perfection, would be as great as God, and it may be that God is simply the greatest poet in the world.

ART AND CRITICISM

OF THE UTILITY OF POETRY

IT is agreed on all hands that ours is not a poetic age, that books of poetry are unsaleable, and that a man must be either mad or a clodhopper if he write verse. Every review of a book of poems must necessarily begin with lamentations or complaints. Besides, critics are not very fond of poets, and they are still less fond of verse. It is of course quite an advantage to depreciate what one does not understand; it makes one so respectable and gives such a high idea of a man's merit, for there are still people simple enough to be taken in by these high and mighty airs, and very few think of requesting these newspaper foxes to turn round and show their tails. It seems to me that the objection that there is no sale for verse is quite unimportant and fails to prove anything against its excellence. The finest things are neither saleable nor purchasable. It is a matter for congratulation that neither love, beauty, nor light are to be found in shops. For the matter of that, there is no book which finds a

sale; the members of the upper classes do not blush to hire books which their footmen scarcely venture to bring back even when they have put on two pairs of gloves; greasy volumes, stained with oil or tallow, smelling of the counter or the kitchen, every page bearing the imprint of unwashed thumbs, and the stupid or obscene remarks of some would-be wit or literary police officer. It is perfectly shameful. Beautiful, high-bred ladies, whose lovely, slender-fingered hands, with rosy nails, have never touched anything coarse or rough, fearlessly handle and turn over the pages of those horribly dirty things called the latest novels. Of a truth, it would not be out of place to have finger-bowls after reading as after dinner. In England it is ladies' maids alone that patronise circulating libraries; if their betters want a book, they take down the publisher's name and address and send and have it bought. No one there would have on the table a single one of the vilely filthy volumes that disgrace tables and shelves in the richest of French drawing-rooms.

This state of things is doubly hurtful both from a hygienic and from a literary point of view, for it cannot be denied that, thanks to circulating libraries, the

part once played by the Hotel de Rambouillet is now played by the denizens of the kitchen. It is cooks who form the greater number of the patrons of circulating libraries, and the remaining portion consists of janitors' wives, though their taste is, as a rule, less choice, and they themselves do not by a long way exercise as much influence. If verse is not saleable, it is because the cooks, who in this respect are like the critics, cannot bear it, because it is too frivolous and lacks coherency. For my own part, I share the opinion of a young poet, who writes charmingly in prose: "Blasphemous it may be, therefore I whisper low that verse, language immortal, beyond all I love. To madness I love it; for in this 't is favoured, that never in any age have dolts understood it; that 't is God-given, limpid, and beauteous, and while the world hears, it speaks it not."

And whether verse sells or not, whether the age be poetic or not, the fact remains that the number of poets goes on increasing day by day.

For, no matter what may be said or done, there will always be poets. The need of expressing his thoughts in rhythmic manner is ingrained in man, and in every literature verse has come before prose, although the

contrary process would seem the more natural one. Before the invention of printing and the propagation of writings there were poets only. The inflexible form of verse, not a single syllable in which may be altered without destroying the harmony completely, was more deeply impressed upon the memory and preserved more faithfully what was intrusted to it. A distich was passed from mouth to mouth a score of times without any change or interpolation being made in it, which would assuredly not have been the case with a sentence in prose, no matter how artistically it might have been composed. In addition, the pleasure derived from harmony and from the overcoming of difficulties is very real and very great. All the utopists with their fine jargon, all the palingenesiacs, mystagogues, and other dabblers in neologisms and bad French, may howl as much as they please against poets, they will never prevent any one making love and dove rime. When it comes to choosing between useless things, or foolish things, it is best after all to choose poets. Watt, the inventor of the steamship, is very far indeed from being as great a genius as Homer the rhapsodist. The Chinese, the masters of porcelain and old lacquer, who, under their strangely diverse exterior conceal such ex-

quisite sense and such deep philosophy, fire guns at steamers, on the ground that these are a barbarous and indecent invention. And they are right, for a steamer is prose, and a sailing-vessel poetry. Is not the steamer, black, massive, built throughout of iron, without pendant or ensign, without the great white wings that swell so gracefully in the breeze, with its furnace and its iron pipes that belch forth fetid smoke, — is not the steamer, hideous to look at, but going far and fast, carrying a large amount of freight and drawing little water, and manned by blacksmiths and not by sailors, exactly like prose, which is always ready to convey whatever you please, wherever you please, safely and quickly, and also cheaply? And is not the sailing-ship, guided by the brain and not by a machine, awaiting the breath from on high in order to start, — is not the sailing-ship, covered with canvas high and low, breasting the sea like some giant swan, and binding to its shining sides a festoon of silvery foam, the perfect symbol of poetry? The sailing-ship looks like a flying bird; the steamer, chumping through the water with its paddles, looks like a drowning dog or a wind-mill carried away on top of a flood. As I am naturally

tolerant, I consent nevertheless that literary drummers and commercial bagmen, whose time is so precious, should take to the railway and carry their samples and their idiocy from one place to another as rapidly as they may, but for Heaven's sake, give us leave to stroll quietly along as our thoughts lead us, by the bank of streams, through mead and copse, now stopping to pluck a daisy wet with dew, now to listen to the blackbird's song, deserting the highway for remoter paths, and doing just as we please. Write prose as much as you like, but let others write verse; plant potatoes, but do not pull up tulips; fatten geese, but do not wring the necks of nightingales, and remember that stout Martin Luther familiarly remarked that he who loves not wine, women, and song is a fool and will be a fool to the end of his days. In spite of all your pretensions you are imperfect, and can understand one side of man only. You fancy that happiness consists in properly cooked beefsteaks and sound electoral laws. I think highly of both these things, but comfort is not enough; every select organisation must have art, must have beauty, must have form. That is the garment God has woven with His own hands to cover the world's nudity.

OF THE UTILITY OF POETRY

Unhappily this is no new debate, and this is not the first time that mathematicians, on reading Racine, have asked: "What does this demonstrate?" No one can expect the deaf to enjoy music, and the blind may chatter at their ease on the superfluity or non-existence of colour.

CIVILISATION AND THE PLASTIC ARTS

THE IDEAL OF BEAUTY IN ANCIENT AND IN MODERN TIMES

ARTISTS often complain of the ugliness of modern civilisation. According to them, the Beautiful, a product of the civilisation of antiquity, has not survived it, and, save for the period called Renaissance, which was a reaction in the direction of Greek and Roman ideas, the feeling for form has almost completely disappeared from this earth.

I shall not here enter upon lengthy æsthetic dissertations upon the meaning of the word Beautiful, which is a thing more easily comprehended than demonstrated. I shall be content with Plato's definition: The Beautiful is the splendour of the True.

Civilisation, which sprang up in India, traversed Egypt and settled in Greece. It manifested itself first by a monstrous, multiple symbolism, that next assumed hieratic stiffness, and was brought back to the types of taste by the eminently artistic Hellenic race.

CIVILISATION AND PLASTIC ARTS

Civilisation acted as does nature, which invariably passes from the complex to the simple, from the misshapen to the beautiful. The notion of a god with an elephant's trunk and polyp-like arms, precedes the Jupiter of Phidias just as the mammoth precedes the horse.

Economy of material and harmony of lines, that is the end aimed at by perfection. To make much out of little is the object of nature, and should be that of art.

Greek and Latin antiquity, with its anthropomorphistic polytheism, possessed in the highest degree the feeling for form; the human body, under which the gods were represented, became the object of positive worship; statuary attained to the highest degree of splendour, and in this respect, to the shame of progress be it said, it may be affirmed that art has not advanced one step for more than two thousand years.

There are many who go so far as to believe that it has retrograded.

Now, is it true that from the point of view of the Beautiful modern times are inferior to the times of antiquity, as is maintained, and in any case, what can be the cause of such a degenerescence?

The substitution of Christian for pagan ideas appears to me to be the primary cause of this degradation of form.

Formerly the human body, set up as the type of the Beautiful, as being the highest development of the configuration of matter, was the ideal regulator of artistic conceptions. And, indeed, the mind cannot imagine a more perfect form than that of man. The Greeks referred everything to this prototype, which assumed, in their hands, the most harmonious proportions; architecture, ceramics, were inspired by its lines, and the poet could say of the Propylæa that their outline bloomed "as with the beauty of a human smile."

The pillars of the Parthenon offer to the caress of the glance the graceful curves of a maiden's form, and the amphoræ recall, in their handles, the arms of women raised above the head to loosen the hair or upbear a basket. The merit of the Greeks in poetry and art is that they ever preserved human proportions. As they tended to this ideal, the purest and surest of all, they easily attained to Beauty, and transformed matter into a really divine thing.

Christianity, which sprang from Essenian and Jewish doctrines, was far from experiencing the same passionate love for form. The Hebrews, as is well known, proscribe images — that is the plastic arts — under the pretext that they conduce to idolatry, and the Jewish

element is far more powerful in Christianity than is generally believed. The early Christians were almost all iconoclasts, and the exploits of the martyrs almost invariably begin with the smashing of a Venus or an Apollo.

Yet, in the Catacombs, there are to be seen Christian mosaics and frescoes which borrow, though awkwardly, the traditional processes of the ancient art in order to render the new symbols; but the farther one progresses, the stiffer do the attitudes become, the more barbaric the forms, and art ends by disappearing.

It is to be noted that I say Christianity, and not Catholicism. This is a necessary distinction. In the Christian doctrine the body not only ceases to be the ideal, it becomes an enemy. Far from exalting and glorifying it, it is abased, reviled, tortured, and killed. It was a palace; it is now turned into a prison. The soul that manifested itself gently under the fair form, now is restless within it and seeks to throw it off as though it were the poisoned tunic of Dejanira.

The outrages upon the statue of Adam, moulded by God's own hands as a type of beauty and harmony, were to be speedily punished; ugliness invaded the world along with barbarism.

The conceptions of the arts, if such a name may be applied to confused products no longer directed by any æsthetics, became merely crystallisations that obeyed certain needs within certain surroundings. Deep night settled down upon humanity.

This bitter war waged against the flesh, originally, perhaps, excusable on account of the reaction against sensualism, struck a mortal blow at the plastic arts. Happily Catholicism came to the succour of Beauty sacrificed, and adorned with splendid ornaments the bareness of the evangelical doctrine. The traditions of Greece were renewed, and polytheism lent its graceful forms to worship. The body, under certain not very strict conditions, was relieved of its curse, and then occurred that great movement of the Renaissance, which was immediately counterbalanced by the Reformation, which revived the old Jewish spirit, the hatred of images, of beauty, and of luxury.

The pagan Catholicism of the Renaissance offered the most favourable conditions for art. The spirit, henceforth sure of itself, no longer felt timid hatred of matter; men dared to listen to the nightingale's song and to breathe the scent of the rose without dreading to see the devil's eyes glaring between the leaves, and his

tail whipping round the trunk of the tree. God the Father became as majestic as Jupiter Tonans; Christ borrowed the form of the Pythian Apollo, and the Virgin Mary, standing upon her azure globe, with the crescent of the moon under her feet, became lovelier and more attractive than Venus. Never were the body and the soul associated in happier proportions. Once they were brought back to this supreme type of modern beauty resplendent in physical beauty, plastic creations developed prodigiously. All things were elevated by exquisite taste; trades became arts, and arts poesy.

Soon, however, the doctrines of the Reformation, that is to say negation taking the place of affirmation, stayed this admirable florescence, this wondrous blossoming of the human race.

Ever since the beginning of the world, these dual principles have been contending together, fortune inclining now to the one, now to the other side, and producing eras of artistic splendour or of barbarism. There have at all times existed certain poor, bare, abstraction-loving, over-scrupulous minds which any manifestation shocks, and who hate form and colour as if they were their personal foes. This tendency, which has had its representatives in every age, may be symbolised in

a very intelligible manner by the difference between a Protestant church and a Catholic one, between a Quaker's sober coat and the gold brocade dalmatic worn by a Venetian patrician in a painting by Paolo Veronese.

Now, we must not conceal from ourselves the fact that though we have nominally remained Catholics, it is the Protestant spirit that has prevailed among us. That middle-class, thrifty, quarrelsome doctrine, fits in well with the envious dispositions of our age. The fear of critical examination and the lack of authority have greatly hindered the external development of civilisation. We have naught but dimmed splendour, quiet luxury, crafty magnificence; for more store is set by cost than beauty, by appearances than by effect. Monumental façades have disappeared, palaces have become houses, and dress has turned as nearly as possible into the domino. Out of regard to universal jealousy, every one has put on a black coat and a loose overcoat.

Beauty has been sacrificed to envy.

The atrabilious have invented, for the benefit of fools, a big word,—the Useful; and, haughtier than the Latin poet, they have declined to conjoin with it the Beautiful.

Then the new needs due to civilisation have produced a multitude of unexpected forms that art has not had time to idealise: our modern era, which dates from the discovery of printing, gunpowder, and steam, is still very young; it scarcely understands the forces it makes use of; its uncovered mechanism allows the works within to be seen. Our lives are spent among inventions in a skeleton or embryonic state.

Imagine men who have been flayed walking about, all bloody, through the streets, with their black arteries and their blue veins, their red flesh, their network of nerves, and their quivering muscles! Could anything be more horrible? Well, civilisation, from the plastic point of view, presents just such a spectacle; it has the bones, the necessary levers, but the flesh and the skin are wanting, and consequently form is absent. All you see are sharp angles, stiff, awkward lines, ugly elbows, toothed cogs, automatic motions, icy activity that terrifies one as if a galvanised body were to move.

Art has to provide civilisation with an epidermis, and the painter and the sculptor have to complete the machinist's work.

Civilisation has no objection to beauty; it is waiting

until art clothes its framework and armature with noble and graceful garments.

The thing is possible and even easy.

It would have been done already, did not poets, architects, sculptors, and painters persist in looking for their ideal in the conceptions of the past, because they are repelled by arid language, unworkable aspects, and ignoble forms. Unfortunately, they have allowed civilisation to fall into the hands of vaudeville writers, masons, mould-makers, and varnish-makers. The taste of the tailoring race flourishes unchecked, and it is milliners who settle colouring instead of Delacroix or Diaz.

What I propose to accomplish, under the title "Civilisation and the Plastic Arts," is a work disdained so far by artists, namely, the applying of a beautiful form to a comfortable, prosaic, or even vulgar object.

It is to be clearly understood that I accept civilisation just as it is, with its railways, its steamers, its machines, its English researches, its stoves, its chimney-pots, and all its paraphernalia, which have hitherto been thought incapable of picturesqueness.

I must beg to be forgiven this long preamble which may appear to the reader to be too long. Although it contains but a rough statement of ideas, it was indis-

pensable. That world of azure and white marble, called the world of antiquity, may be balanced on the sphere of time by a new world brilliant with steel and gas, as beautiful in its activity as the other was in its serene reverie.

Admirable materials lie ready to hand, and require merely to be put together to produce splendid results. I do not expect to meet with success in the vast undertaking I am entering upon, but I shall point out possibilities, stir up thoughts, and perchance bring artists, now astray while pursuing a retrospective ideal, to the truth.

I shall criticise, but I shall invariably place the correct form by the side of the erroneous one. I shall deny and I shall affirm; I shall take to task for their ugliness both the hat and the locomotive, the palace as well as the trousers with straps, and I shall prove — a thing that requires to be done in these thrifty times — that the ugly is as expensive as the beautiful.

HOFFMANN'S TALES

HOFFMANN is popular in France; more so than in Germany. Everybody has read his tales, and both the janitress and the great lady, the artist and the publican have been satisfied with them. Nevertheless it seems strange that so eccentric a talent, so different from what literary France is used to, should so speedily have been received into communion. The Frenchman is not naturally fanciful, and indeed it would be difficult to be so in a country so plentifully supplied with newspapers and street-lamps. The semi-obscurity, which is so necessary to the play of fancy, does not exist in France either in the thoughts, in the language, or in the houses. The most impossible thing on earth is a tale of Hoffmann's set in surroundings that include Voltairian beliefs, a crystal lamp, and tall windows. Who, passing under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, could possibly observe the little blue serpents writhing around that were visible to Anselmo the schoolboy? And what reader of the *National* could ever entertain such dread of the

devil as to feel the shudder that ran down Hoffmann's back while he was engaged in writing his tales, and compelled him to wake his wife to keep him company? For the matter of that what the devil would the devil come to Paris for? He would come upon other people who are far more devils than he is, and he would be taken in as readily as a country bumpkin. He would have his money swindled out of him at écarté; he would be fooled into taking shares in some company, and if he were not provided with proper papers, he would be sent to jail. Mephistopheles himself, on whose behalf the great Wolfgang von Goethe went to such trouble in the way of rascality and evil skill, and who is in truth quite satanic considering the time at which he appears, would strike us as rather childish. He has but just taken his degree at the University of Jena. *Our* spectres wear white kid gloves and eye-glasses, and at midnight repair to Tortoni's to eat ices. Instead of the awful moans uttered by German ghosts, our Parisian ghosts hum comic opera airs as they stroll through the cemeteries. How then comes it that Hoffmann's tales were so readily and generally understood, and that the most common-sense people on earth should have unreservedly adopted

his mad and vagabond fancies? It cannot be explained by attributing it to the effects of novelty and surprise, for his success is maintained and grows year by year. It is because the idea people have of Hoffmann is erroneous, like all generally received ideas.

Gently buttonhole a literary man, or a man of the world, bring him to bay in a window recess or under a carriage gateway, and, after having inquired the price of stocks and asked after his wife's health, bring the conversation round to Hoffmann by the most ingenious transition you can manage. May I be a cab-horse or a member of a provincial Academy, if he does not at once mention the traditional huge meerschaum pipe and Master Luther's cellar in Berlin. Then he will venture the subtle remark that Hoffmann is a great genius, but a diseased genius, and that as a matter of fact a number of his tales are most improbable. The engraving which represents him seated on a pile of barrels, smoking a big pipe, and surrounded by fanciful scroll work, flibbertigibbets, small serpents, and other bogies, sums up the opinion of the German author which many people, even clever ones, have accepted ready-made.

I do not deny that Hoffmann did smoke a great deal, that he did occasionally get fuddled on German beer or Rhine wine, and that he had frequent attacks of fever, but that sort of thing happens to everybody and has very little to do with his talent. It is desirable to clear up the mind of the public, once for all, on the point of these supposed means of exciting inspiration. Neither wine nor tobacco imparts genius; a great man when drunk lurches from side to side just like anybody else, and because one tumbles into the gutter it does not follow that one will be exalted to the skies. I do not believe that any man ever wrote decently after parting with his brains and his reason, and I fancy that the wildest and most vehement tirades have been composed in the company of a carafe of water.

The cause of Hoffmann's success lies unquestionably in a direction where no one would think of looking for it. It lies in the strong and true feeling for nature which shows so vividly in his most unexplainable compositions.

Hoffmann, in truth, is among writers one of the quickest to seize the character of things and to impart the appearance of reality to the most unlikely creations. At once a painter, a poet, and a musician, he notes

everything under a triple aspect, that of sounds, colours, and feelings. He takes account of external forms with wondrous clearness and accuracy. His touch is sharp and sympathetic; he has the knack of drawing silhouettes, and sportively cuts out innumerable mysterious and striking profiles which it is impossible not to remember and which give the impression of having been seen before.

His method of working is very logical, and he does not, as might be supposed, ramble at haphazard through the realms of fancy.

He begins his tale. There is seen a German interior; a deal floor carefully holystoned, whitewashed walls, windows framed in with hop-vine, a piano in one corner, a tea-table in the centre; the plainest and simplest interior possible. Suddenly, however, one of the piano strings snaps untouched with a sound like the moan of a woman, and the sound long vibrates in the resonant case. The reader's peace of mind is forthwith broken and he mistrusts the apparently calm and honest interior. Hoffmann may affirm as much as he pleases that the string is really nothing else than a string drawn too tight that has snapped as strings snap every day; the reader refuses to be convinced.

Meanwhile the water is heating; the kettle begins to bubble and hiss; Hoffmann, who is getting uneasy himself, listens so intently and so seriously to the humming of the coffee-pot that the reader remarks to himself with terror that there is something about it which is unnatural, and becomes expectant of an extraordinary happening. There enters a maiden, fair and lovely, dressed in white, a flower in her hair, or an old Aulic Councillor, in iron-gray coat, chiné stockings, imitation shoe-buckles, and his hair powdered. On the whole he has a jolly, entertaining face, yet the reader shudders with terror just as if he saw Lady Macbeth appear with her lamp in her hand, or Hamlet's father's ghost glide in. On looking closer at the maiden, he discovers a suspicious green tinge in her eyes; the brilliant carmine of her lips does not strike him as consonant with the waxen pallor of her neck and hands, and just when she thinks she is not noticed a slender lizard's tail is seen quivering in the corner of her mouth. The old Councillor himself makes certain undefinable ironical faces; the reader mistrusts his apparent good-naturedness, begins to entertain the most alarming conjectures concerning his nocturnal occupations, and while the worthy man is deep in the

reading of Puffendorf or Grotius, suspects him of seeking to penetrate into the mysterious secrets of the Cabala and to decipher the much scrawled pages of a devil's horn-book. From that moment suffocating terror oppresses the reader, and he ceases to breathe freely until the end of the tale has been reached. The farther the tale diverges from the ordinary course of things, the more minutely are the objects described, and the accumulation of slight probable circumstances serves to mask the impossibility of the main portion. Hoffmann is endowed with a marvellous gift of observation, especially where ridiculous physical peculiarities are concerned; he notes remarkably well the comical and laughable side of forms, and in this he is singularly like Jacques Callot, and especially like Goya, a Spanish caricaturist who is too little known, and whose works, at once comical and terrible, produce the same effects as the tales of the German story-teller.

In art an untrue thing may be quite true, and a true one quite untrue; it all depends on the execution. Scribe's plays are more untrue than Hoffmann's tales, and there are few books that, artistically speaking, have subjects more readily admissible than "The Entail" and "The Cremona Violin." Then one is agreeably

surprised to come upon pages full of feeling, passages that sparkle with wit and taste, dissertations upon the arts, and an amount of fun and a sense of humour that one does not expect to meet with in a hypochondriacal German who believes in the devil, and also, a matter of importance to French readers, the node is skilfully involved and solved; there are catastrophes and events, in a word all that constitutes interest, in the ideal and the material meaning of the word.

Further, Hoffmann's use of the marvellous is not quite analogous to the use of it in fairy tales; he always keeps in touch with the world of reality, and rarely does one come across a palace of carbuncles with diamond turrets in his works, while he makes no use whatever of the wands and talismans of "The Thousand and One Nights." The supernatural elements to which he commonly has recourse are occult sympathy and antipathy, curious forms of mania, visions, magnetism, and the mysterious and malignant influence of a vaguely indicated principle of evil. It is the positive and plausible side of the fantastic; and in truth Hoffmann's tales should be called tales of caprice or fancy rather than fantastic tales. It follows that the dreamier and cloudier Germans greatly prefer Novalis to him,

and look upon Hoffmann as heavy and fit for the most robust literary stomachs only. His vivacity and the absolutely Italian warmth of his colouring offend their eyes, which are accustomed to the mournful pallor of winter moonlight. Jean Paul Richter, who was assuredly a good judge in matters of this sort, said that Hoffmann's works had the effect of a camera obscura in which one sees the working of a complete living microcosm. This deep feeling for life, though often eccentric and depraved, is one of Hoffmann's greatest merits, placing him far above ordinary tale-writers, and in this respect his stories are far more realistic and probable than many a novel thought out and written with cool steadiness. The moment life shows in a work, success is attained, for it is not difficult to mould clay to any desired form; the important thing is to snatch from heaven or hell the fire that is to vivify the clay phantoms, and since the days of Prometheus it has not often been done.

There is nothing fantastic in the greater number of Hoffmann's tales. "Mademoiselle de Scudéry," "The Entail," "Salvator Rosa," "Master Martin and his Apprentices," and "Marino Faliero," are stories in which the marvellous is explainable in the simplest

possible way, and they are those of his works which unquestionably do him most honour.

Hoffmann was a man who had seen much of the world and of mankind; he had been a theatre manager and had long lived on intimate terms with actors and actresses. In the course of his wandering and well-filled life, he must necessarily have seen and learned much. He occupied various stations in life; he was well off at one time and poor at another; he was acquainted with superfluity and with privations; besides his real life he led an ideal one; he mingled dreams and activity; in a word, he led the life of a man, and not that of a writer only. Indeed, even if his biography were not known, one would guess as much from the number of different characters, plainly taken from life, of keen and caustic remarks about worldly matters, and the thorough knowledge of mankind manifest in every page of his work. His views about the drama are strikingly unconventional and sound, and testify to his close acquaintance with the subject. No one has spoken of music with so thorough a knowledge and so much enthusiasm; his musical characters are master-pieces of naturalness and originality. He alone, being himself a musician, was capable of depicting so comi-

cally the musical sufferings of Chapel-Master Kreisler, for Hoffmann is endowed with a keen sense of the comic and the tribulations of his simple-minded heroes provoke the heartiest laughter.

I lay a good deal of stress upon the human and ordinary side of Hoffmann's talent, for he has unfortunately created a school, and unskilful imitators, mere imitators, in a word, have fancied that all that was needed was to heap absurdities one upon another and to jot down at haphazard the fancies of an over-excited imagination in order to become a fantastic and original writer. On the contrary, even in the maddest and most unruly fancifulness it is necessary that there should be an air of common-sense, a pretext of some sort or other, a plan, characters, and consistency; else the work will be mere empty verbiage, and the most eccentric fancies will not cause the least surprise. There is nothing so difficult as to succeed in a kind of writing in which the fullest liberty is allowed, for the freer the author is, the more exacting the reader becomes; and it is no small praise to say that Hoffmann won so great a success with readers so little disposed to listen to tales of wonder.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

IF there be a subject known the world over, it is assuredly that of "The Barber of Seville." Beaumarchais' play made such a sensation that it is wellnigh impossible to speak of it without repeating what has already been said until it has become hackneyed. Figaro, Bartolo, Basilio, Rosina, Almaviva, are popular names; they are, notwithstanding their piquant originality, types as general, as human, as eternal, as the masks of the comedy of antiquity. Figaro, with a wit that changes and sparkles like a jacket of Andalusian cloth, sums up in the happiest possible way every Davus and Scappino and Mascarille, the whole breed, in short, of unscrupulous valets who put their cleverness at the service of their masters' passions.

And how engaging is Rosina! How true she is in spite of her little mischievous girl's tricks! And what a breath of youth and love there is in that lovely part of hers which so many famous singers have attempted, though not one has ever fully succeeded in it!

Then Count Almaviva! He is indeed a genuine, great nobleman, brave and loyal at bottom, though he allows himself to be carried away by his passion with the readiness of a man unused to meeting with obstacles.

As for Bartolo, the guardian, he is the equal of Molière's Arnolphe, and more need not be said, while Basilio's name has become a byword like that of Tartuffe.

When the curtain rises, the stage represents a street in Seville, not as it really exists, but as one fancies it must be. I do not know why I always feel sure it must be the Calle de la Serpie, at the point where it debouches into the Cathedral Square. It is a fine spot with broad spaces of shadow and moonlight; the night breeze wafts to it the spicy odours of the orange trees in the patio, and guitar players find low stone posts ready to their feet.

I have no doubt that Bartolo's house stood on the corner where now stands the Café Nuevo. It must have been whitewashed, after the Arab fashion, and covered with a roof of varnished tiles, with gratings at every opening, and *miradores* enshrined in iron-work, looking from a distance like dark eyes in a pale face. A few branches of jasmine planted by Rosina starred

the network of bars, and in the corner flickered a tiny lamp in front of the dark Madonna set within the recess of the wall.

It is in this sort of aerial cabinet, a bird-cage suspended outside the building with a view to intercept the draughts of air that are so valuable in a burning clime, that Rosina spends every moment she can snatch from the watchfulness of her tyrant. The tip of her small foot, in its white satin shoe, shows through the grating, and from under the bottom of the leaded skirt peep her slender, shapely limbs. From time to time there is heard a strange rustling; it is the fan being opened and shut, like the wing of a startled bird, with the rapidity of which Spanish women alone have the secret. What lovely eyes she has, and what long lashes! What a wealth of black hair! What small, well-set teeth, flashing white in her rosy smile! What a complexion of amber and sunshine! No wonder Bartolo is jealous!

I confess that I like Bartolo, and that I think he has never had fair play. He is quite right in objecting to having such a treasure stolen from him and in watching over it with the utmost vigilance. It is true that Molière says that "bolts and bars are but poor safe-

guards for the virtue of maids;" but if virtue under lock and key is not to be trusted, does it follow that Rosina should be presented with the balcony key? Women, of course, will say yes, and men no. What is sure and certain is that it is the saddest and most wretched of fates to be old and in love, to have a heart of fire and hair of snow. I never have been able to laugh with a good heart at all those poor old fellows, guardians of maidens, all those Gérontes and Arnolphes who are fooled, tricked, and deceived. For it is not very pleasant, of a surety, to bring up a ward most tenderly and daintily for one's self, to surround her with attentions and worship, to think of no one else in the world, and then to see her carried off by the first scamp that chances to come along, for no other reason than that he is well set up, has a curly mustache, and walks past with hand on hip.

Very often, when present at a performance of "The Barber of Seville," I have taken Bartolo's part against Almaviva, who is nothing else than a rake; against Figaro, who is a gallows-bird, and even, dare I say it? against Rosina herself, in spite of her adorable fifteen-year-old shamelessness and her resolute simplicity of a little lass who is enjoying her first love affair.

But, when all is said and done, is it not the case that youth draws to youth, and that gratitude, respect, and veneration do not weigh much in comparison with love? So you must e'en console yourself as best you may, poor Bartolo, for I am now entering upon the analysis of your tortures.

Who is that prowling down there, a sombrero pulled well down over his eyes, carefully wrapped in a mantle, and a dark lantern in his hand? Why, it is Fiorello, Count Almaviva's valet, who brings in the musicians, performers of serenades, brutes most deservedly abhorred of guardians, husbands, and jealous people of every kidney. Now the noise begins. Almaviva, his eyes turned up and one hand on his heart, is singing a cold, pretentious, hackneyed thing of the kind that all women, even the cleverest, in all countries and in all ages, think charming. This time, the audience is with the ladies, for the Signor Rossini has embroidered marvellous melodies upon the meaningless words of the Italian song, which are full of meaning precisely because meaningless. Yet the dawn is breaking and Rosina has not appeared; probably because she does not want to hurt the dawn's feelings, for any one who knows Spain will find it hard to believe that a young Sevillian

girl, hearing from her room the lilt of a serenade under her balcony, will not come on tip-toe, half asleep, and press her pretty face against the cross bars of the reja, and *pelar la paba* with her *novio*. And indeed, were I not engaged in describing an Italian opera, I could give you an Andalusian *copla* which affirms that such a thing is impossible and has never been known.

So Count Almaviva cannot understand it, and would almost despair, were it possible for a man of his quality to doubt for a moment his own powers, even though he has now been dancing attendance under the balcony for many a night and many a day. He dismisses the musicians, who are making a terrific row, as do all musicians when they are requested to cease from troubling, and he walks up and down under a portico in front of the house, waiting for the moment when Rosina comes to her window, partly to see if her carnations are blossoming, but a good deal more to observe whether the handsome stranger happens to be strolling around.

Suddenly, in the cool, silent morn, rings out sonorous a song as blithe as that of the lark when Phœbus 'gins to rise, a song of voluble chatter. It is Figaro making his appearance; Figaro in his spangled and

embroidered jacket bestudded with filigree buttons, his punto breeches, his net for the hair (in those days nets were still worn in Spain), his guitar slung on his back, polished like tortoiseshell, and his shaving dish, so refulgent that Don Quixote would have mistaken it for Mambrino's helmet. Every one knows that wonderful air, so catching and irresistible. Passing from mouth to mouth, it has travelled as far as Polynesia, and the natives of the Southern Seas hum it as they cook their breakfast of shell-fish.

Figaro is happy like the gay rascal he is. He enjoys the peace of mind of the unjust, and kind Heaven having endowed him with an easy conscience, he carries on, with the utmost coolness, a whole lot of minor and hazardous businesses that are, on the other hand, exceedingly lucrative. He has lots of fun, little work and enough money. Is not that true happiness? He shaves, he bleeds, he curls hair, he carries love-letters, he brings together young hearts made to understand each other. Gallants, ladies, lovers, jealous people, all need Figaro. Here, Figaro! Hi, Figaro! is the call heard the city over. Take Figaro out of Seville, and life and action vanish with him, for without him no affairs or intrigues are possible,

nor can any love-letter reach the hands it is intended for. What would eldest sons do to get money out of their parents? Who would there be to bring to quiet little suppers a gipsy with golden complexion, an adept in the art of dancing the *zorongo* while swishing her blue skirt diapered with silver stars? Figaro it is who knows the abiding place of black eyes and blue, and of green eyes too, and if he see the sheen of gold through the meshes of a silken purse, he will find a way of getting the owner thereof to talk with the owners of the eyes, in spite of grim fathers and jealous old fools, for he is cleverer than the devil or an old hag. In addition to all the skill he thus displays, he has had the further luck of not being hanged and of living on the best of terms with all the representatives of the law.

— Why! unless I greatly mistake, it is Figaro! says the Count. You are very thin, my lad.

— Hard work, my lord.

— You rascal.

— A thousand thanks, my lord.

— What are you doing in Seville?

— Shaving people. And your lordship?

— I saw a young lady at the Prado, a wonder of beauty, the daughter of a dotard old physician.

— Not his daughter; his ward.

— So much the better. I have been paying court to her for some time past under the name of Lindor.

What a fellow that Almaviva is, to be sure! Right off, he takes the name, among so many names, of Lindor; a name that at once suggests an apricot-coloured coat with black velvet trimmings, a romantic name well calculated to turn the head of every little maid.

— Nothing could be better; I happen to be the barber and hairdresser, the surgeon and botanist, the pharmacist and the veterinary and the business man of the family, replies the worthy Figaro. If you have money, all will be well. But silence; some one is opening the balcony; let us withdraw under the arcades.

Rosina puts her pretty little nose out of the window, and is quite troubled at not seeing handsome Lindor. Bartolo is at her heels, for he cannot fathom the reason of the young lady's matutinal curiosity concerning the state of the weather.

— What is that you have in your hand? What is the paper you are holding?

— The words of an air that is very popular just now: "The Useless Precaution." Oh! such a

pity! I have dropped them. Pray run quickly and pick them up for me.

You know, and the Count knows, that the paper which has fallen from her hands does not contain a single one of the words of "The Useless Precaution." It does not take much wit to know that much. Figaro picks up the paper and hands it to the Count. Bartòlo cannot make out in which particular direction the wind has blown the song, and goes upstairs again, grumbling, to make Rosina re-enter the room, swearing the while that he will have the cursed balcony bricked up. While his back is turned, let us hasten to read Rosina's note, for a note it is: —

"Your assiduous attentions have awakened my interest. My guardian will go out presently; as soon as he is gone, try to let me know, by some ingenious means, your name, your condition, and your intentions. I can never come to the balcony without being accompanied by my inseparable tyrant, but you may be sure that I am prepared to do anything to break my fetters."

And that is the sort of thing a decent and lovely girl is led to write to the first spark that happens along by dint of being worried, vexed, annoyed, and odiously kept under watch and ward.

The means will be found, if not by Almaviva, who does not look like a very inventive person, by Figaro. It is a fine thing to be a Count and wealthy. Then one can always have poor devils at hand to be clever for one and to harness themselves to the car of one's fancy or passion.

— Have you any money ? says Figaro.

— Heaps, returns the Count.

— In that case I have thought of something. When I think of the almighty metal my head becomes a volcano, I boil, I ferment; a thousand ways occur to me. Dress yourself as a soldier.

— As a soldier ? What for ?

— A regiment has just come into the town —

— The colonel, it so happens, is a friend of mine.

— You will be billeted on Bartolo, and there you are ! Nothing could be simpler. For my part I shall keep the old chap so busy that you will have time to whisper in Rosina's ear the four words she expects. Pretend to be drunk; people are not so suspicious of a man whose brain is clouded by the fumes of wine. In all ages the sincerity of drunken people has been believed in. And now, to work.

— But where shall I find you? Where is your shop? says the Count, observing Figaro on the point of vanishing with the purse.

— My shop is the easiest shop in the world to know. It is on the right, number four, a splendid sky-blue front, with five wigs, six shaving dishes, and a lamp. Can't mistake it.

While the Count goes off to put on his disguise, and Figaro is lathering the customers' cheeks, let us repair to Rosina's room, the furniture of which consists of a piano, a desk, and a grating erected carefully round the balcony. She is alone, holding a letter in her hand, and is singing the lovely cavatina, *Una voce poco fa*, beginning as dainty as a rosebud bursting its corset of green velvet, then blooming and trustful as youth, and towards the end, capricious and wilful, and indulging in coquettish rebellion. The cavatina done, she goes to the desk and writes a letter. She has seen Figaro talking for more than an hour on the square with the Count; they are therefore acquainted; Figaro is a good fellow, willing to help, and perhaps he may assist our loves.

Talk of the devil, and you see his horns; talk of the wolf, and you see his tail; talk of Figaro, and

you see his net. He enters with the light, furtive step common to cats and plotters, who can step on eggs without breaking them.

— Why, good morning, Miss Rosina. What are you doing now?

— I am bored to death.

— There 's something I should like to tell you.

— And there 's something I 'd like to tell you. But silence! I hear my guardian's step. Wait a little.

Bartolo enters, coughing, spitting, grumbling, and quarrels with his niece because she is always talking with that rascally Figaro.

— Are you jealous of Figaro? I own I do like to talk to him; he entertains me, makes me laugh, and tells me ever so much nonsense.

— Yes, but what is the meaning of that stain of ink on your finger?

— I burned my finger and dipped it in the ink-bottle.

— There is a sheet of paper wanting. What have you done with it?

— I made a paper bag of it to put sweets in for little Marceline. Does that satisfy you?

— No, angrily retorts the old fellow. You are telling me tales and trying to fool me.

While the quarrel is proceeding, enters Don Basilio, a tall, gawky fellow, thin, skinny, yellow, bilious looking, bony, unhealthy, with a venomous look; a rascal with low, flat brow, thin lips, forked tongue, who seems to have been cut out to wear a black cassock and a wide-brimmed hat; a fellow of the stuff of which spies, inquisitors and executioners are made; a soft-tongued villain always ready for sinister and evil undertakings.

He approaches and whispers in Bartolo's ear that the unknown gallant who is prowling under Rosina's balcony is none else than the famous Count Almaviva, who has recently come to Seville.

The danger must be warded off, but quietly. In what way? By means of a nice little piece of slander.

It is here that comes in the wonderful air, in which the composer has possibly surpassed the writer, although the tirade is one of the most brilliant things ever written by a human pen: —

— Calumny! at first a faint whisper that skims over the ground like a swallow before a storm, pianissimo, breathing low and gliding along dropping its poisoned darts. This one picks it up, and piano, piano, drops it into your ear skilfully. The harm is done, it

germinates, it crawls, it makes its way, and rinforzando from mouth to mouth it goes like the devil. Then suddenly, I know not how, you see calumny rise up, hiss, swell, grow visibly; it starts, spreads its pinions, whirls, envelops, drags out, carries away, bursts out, thunders, and becomes a general hue and cry, a public crescendo, a universal chorus that resounds everywhere, and the unhappy wretch, slandered, reviled, overwhelmed, falls, *most fortunately*, under the weight of general execration. — What think you of it?

— That is all very fine, replies Bartolo, sufficiently edified; but there is a surer way yet. I shall wed the girl to-morrow.

— Let me have some money, says Basilio, who, in these matters, holds the same doctrines as Figaro, and I engage to draw off the coxcombs.

Whereupon the fool and the rascal pass into another room.

— So, that is the way you go to work, you dear old scoundrel, says Figaro, issuing from his hiding-place. You are a nice fellow with your sour lemon look and your hypocritical airs. And that other old ass who fancies he is going to wed Rosina! That dainty morsel is not meant for his toothless old gums; not

if I know it. Here she comes in the very nick of time. I must try to speak to her while they are closeted together. Senorita, I have a great piece of news for you. To-morrow, without fail, you wed your amiable guardian. He is in the next room engaged in drawing up the necessary papers with your music master.

— Figaro, I promise you one thing: that marriage shall not take place. But, by the way, who is the young gentleman you were talking to just now on the square?

— A cousin of mine and a good fellow; a warm-hearted chap. He is here to complete his studies and make his fortune.

— He will certainly do that, answers Rosina.

— He has one great fault, however; he is madly in love.

— Do you know who it is he is in love with?

— She is small, dainty, with splendid black hair and eyes; the first letter of her name is R; she is called Ro— Rosi—

— It is I, exclaims the young girl in the seventh heaven of happiness. I was right!

— Come, let me have a couple of lines from you;

time presses, says the prompt barber. Sit down at the desk there.

— I shall never dare to, says Rosina, at the same time drawing from her bosom a delicately folded note.

— She has the note already written! exclaims Figaro with a gesture of admiration, and I who — Well, a nice fool I am! O women! women! the most stupid of you could give points to the devil.

The note is speedily handed over, and Count Almaviva, sure that Rosina approves, speedily makes use of the stratagem sprung from Figaro's fruitful brain. Disguised as a cavalryman, he comes to the house of grumpy Bartolo, describing the most extraordinary zigzags, and with the gestures and the hiccoughs of a drunken man. I leave you to imagine the sort of reception he meets with at the hands of the irascible old gentleman, who is perfectly justified, this time, in getting very angry when he beholds the brutal trooper noisily invading his house. Rosina, ever alert, ever wide awake, and on the watch, hastens in at the sound and inquires the cause of the unusual disturbance.

— I am Lindor, whispers the Count to her.

— Be prudent, returns Rosina.

— Let your handkerchief drop on this note, and pick it up, goes on the Count, describing an exceedingly sharp angle and pretending to lose his centre of gravity.

Rosina manages to obtain possession of the love-letter with a deftness worthy of the cleverest prestidigitator, and the row goes on between the Count and Bartolo, the latter in vain alleging that he is exempted from lodging soldiers. The Count pays no heed to his arguments, and in order to scare the old gentleman, draws his bilbo and makes lunges into the empty air. The old fellow yells and the row becomes so great that the authorities intervene, to the great grief of Rosina and the great joy of Bartolo. The police are about to march Lindor off to jail when, brushing aside the alguazils with a haughty and imperious air, he hands the alcalde a letter. The alcalde, after having glanced at it, bows to the ground and signs to his men to release the trooper, who himself withdraws in the swing of a finale full of life, agitation and volubility, such as Rossini alone knows how to compose.

Although Don Bartolo is by no means bright, the drunken soldier business has struck him as very suspicious; jealousy is apt to make even the densest gray-

beards clear-sighted. His credulity, however, is about to be tested even more severely. Lindor, or Count Almaviva, if you like that better, returns ere long under the disguise and the name of Alonzo, a supposed pupil of Basilio's, to take the latter's place at the music lesson he is in the habit of giving Rosina.

Bartolo receives him rather sourly, and is hard to convince that Basilio is really as ill as Alonzo pretends. In fact, to the Count's great terror, he has already taken his stick with a view of ascertaining the facts for himself. The Count can think of nothing better than fooling him with a supposed piece of confidential information, and hands him Rosina's note. Reassured by this proof of devotion to his interests, Bartolo goes to fetch the girl from her room and allows her to take her lesson with her new teacher. People talk of the lynx's eyes; a lynx is no better than a mole in comparison with a girl in love; Bartolo's ward has seen at a glance who it is she is going to sing with.

The piano is pulled forward, and the Count glances over the music lying upon it.

— What shall we sing?

— This rondo by Buranello.

— It is too old, answers Rosina.

— This bolero ?

— It is miauled every night under every window; it is sickening, puts in Bartolo.

— A Venetian barcarole ?

— That will do.

Whereupon the Count sets Rosina to sing a charming melody for which the singers who take this part are foolish enough to substitute very difficult and very wearisome show pieces. The words are delightful: —

"A golden-haired maid in my gondola the other night I took. The little dear from sheer pleasure fell asleep, and on my arm lay dozing. From time to time I woke her, and the rocking of the craft cradled her to sleep again."

The situation could not be much prolonged did not clever Figaro come to Count Almaviva's help, for the nobleman, like Lelio, Mascarille's master, is not a person of ready resource. Figaro persuades Bartolo that this is the day on which he is shaved, and under pretext of fetching the necessary utensils, gets hold of his bunch of keys, quick as a monkey abstracts the key that opens the balcony gate, and by innumerable tricks, each more ridiculous than the others, gives the lovers time to settle

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

A photogravure after a painting by Jose Villegas

But, O ill fortune! Here the tall yellow wax candle rolled up in a strip of black cloth, the bird of evil omen, the owl, the raven Basilio, comes in person to give the lie to the fable invented by the Count.

their plans. He blinds the old chap with foaming lather, covers his face up with a napkin, and so on. At midnight Almaviva is to be under the balcony with a rope-ladder, everything is to be in readiness, and the pair of lovers will elope together.

But O ill fortune! Here the tall yellow wax candle rolled up in a strip of black cloth, the bird of evil omen, the owl, the raven Basilio, comes in person to give the lie to the fable invented by the Count. Of course when he makes his appearance, there is a general shout of: —

— How ghastly pale you are!

— You look like a corpse!

— You have the smell of fever on you!

— Go to bed and dose yourself!

Basilio, who is not any greener than usual, is astounded at all this hullabaloo about his ill health, but a purse which the Count slips into the wretch's bony hand, enlightens him. He finds out that he is very poorly indeed, and withdraws to take to his bed.

But the jealous Bartolo's suspicions are again aroused by a word he has caught, and he kicks out the sham music teacher and his acolyte with an abundance of curses. They retire laughing, for all their arrangments

are made, and there is no longer any reason why they should stay in their foe's house.

Bartolo sends for Basilio to return and questions him. Basilio informs him that he is not in the least acquainted with Alonzo, and that he has no pupil of that name.

— Then that Alonzo must have been some emissary of the Count's.

— Or the Count himself; his purse testifies to that, remarks Basilio to himself.

— Now I think of it, exclaims Bartolo, we must make Rosina believe that the note which Alonzo handed me had been given by the Count to a mistress of his.

Of course the poor girl is indignant when she sees in Bartolo's dirty hand the dear little note written under such difficulties, and which she had carried so long inside her corset before finding an opportunity to hand it on. In her despair, she consents to wed Bartolo. It is a sort of suicide. The graybeard, transported with joy, hurries off to fetch the notary.

Meanwhile the hour appointed for the elopement strikes. Almaviva and Figaro make their appearance at the top of the ladder. At first Rosina thinks she will call out for help; she accuses Lindor of having deceived her, but he throws himself at her feet, reveals

his real name and rank, and wins forgiveness. It is never difficult to do that when one is young and handsome.

Rosina consents to go with him, and the pair make ready to get over the balcony, when they discover that the ladder has been removed. At the same time steps are heard on the stairs.

— Who goes there?

— Master Basilio, accompanied by the notary.

— By Jove! It could not be better. Mr. Notary, here is the affianced pair, says Figaro, pointing to the Count and Rosina. You have the marriage contract; insert their names, if you please, and let us sign quickly. I am witness for his lordship, and Don Basilio for the lady.

— But I am not sure that I ought —

— Perhaps you would prefer to be chucked out of the window?

— No, no indeed; it is too unhealthy. I prefer to sign.

And Bartolo, who after taking away the ladder, had gone for the watch, arrives just as the contract has been signed and sealed. He wants to have Almaviva and Figaro arrested on a charge of having burglariously

entered his premises, but the Count states who he is, and as, all being said and done, he proposes to marry Rosina without a portion, the miserly guardian gives his consent to the match, and comes to the conclusion that he gains more than he loses by the bargain.

Before I close, let me add a few particulars of the vicissitudes undergone by Rossini's masterpiece.

The young composer was twenty-four when he wrote "The Barber of Seville" at Rome for the Argento Theatre. An opera on the same subject had already been written in Russia, towards the end of the previous century, by Paësiello, Catherine's favourite composer. The Neapolitan master's "Barber of Seville" made a sensation in the Eternal City after having been very coldly received at first, and Rossini's attempt was considered a sort of sacrilege; very much as if a French writer were to venture on re-writing Racine's "Andromache."

The first performance was so stormy that Rossini dared not appear at the piano on the second night, pretended to be ill and went to bed, waiting anxiously for the result of the second attempt.

At about midnight, he heard a great tumult, saw the flashing of torches through the windows, and heard

numberless steps sounding on the stairs. The poor maestro, trembling in every limb, took refuge under his blankets, convinced that the Romans proposed to make him expiate, by cutting him up, the crime of having eclipsed Paësiello's work. But it was not that; the luck had turned, the "Barber" had met with shining success, and it was an ovation, a serenade which they were coming to give to Rossini, henceforth recognised as the greatest master in Italy and the whole world.

ART AND CRITICISM

IN GREECE

I

THE PARTHENON

ON issuing from the Propylæa, one beholds the Parthenon!

Let me dwell awhile on this simple word which calls up so many thoughts: the Parthenon, or Temple of the Virgin; for Minerva, called Pallas Athene by the Greeks, was the purest creation of pagan mythology. Sprung fully grown and fully armed from Jupiter's brain, she knew no stain, not even the one original stain. By her lance watched the dragon that guarded her virginity; the sleepless owl stared out from above her helm with its night-bird's eyes, and her chaste bosom was protected by the Medusa's head. In overcrowded Olympus she was the one pure, ideal, and really divine figure, and, be it said without venturing on any sacrilegious comparison, the Madonna of that corrupt heaven in which all the vices of earth were personified in some deity.

Thus it was that her temple was the most magnificent of all pagan fanes, and the one on which the genius of antiquity lavished its highest efforts.

The existing Parthenon is not the original building, overthrown during the Persian invasion, and the débris of which are strewn on the platform of the Acropolis or buried under constructions of more recent date. Ictinus and Callicrates erected, during the reign of Pericles, the Leo X of Attica, a temple which they made so radiantly perfect that Time seems to have regretted having to touch it, and that, but for barbarous man, it would have come down intact to our days. The ages, more pious than nations, had respected it as though they had the feeling for art and had understood how impossible it was for humanity to repeat such a marvel. For there, indeed, set upon the Acropolis as upon a golden tripod in the midst of the sculptural choir of the mountains of Attica, shines immortally true, absolute, perfect Beauty. After that, there are but varieties of decadence, and Greece, leaning upon mighty ruins, still has the proud aristocratic right to spurn all else as barbaric. We have got rid of our tattooing, we have pulled the fish-bones from our noses, we have exchanged our stone hatchets for

needle-guns, but that is all. In the presence of this work, so pure, so noble, so beautiful, so harmoniously balanced, so divinely rhythmical, one becomes humbly and deeply thoughtful, troublesome questions suggest themselves, and one must fain wonder whether human genius, that fancies it strides so fast along the path of progress, has not, on the contrary, retrograded; and one comes to the conclusion that, in spite of new religions, of inventions of all sorts, — the mariner's compass, the printing-press, the steam-engine, — the notion of beauty has either vanished from this earth, or else that the children of this world are powerless to express it.

The Propylæa are not exactly in accord with the axis of the Parthenon, which, owing to the configuration of the ground, is a little more to the right. The ancients did not strive, as we do, to attain rigorous, mathematical symmetry, but rather happy oppositions of masses; and they were right.

The road followed, between blocks of marble, débris of Turkish hovels, and sub-structures of ancient walls, up to the façade of the marvellous monument, is the primitive path itself, which has been cleared away down to the living rock. Ictinus, Callicrates,

Phidias and all those great men who are now living the immortal and universal life, have trod with their divine feet upon these sacred stones that every artist ought to kiss, his brow humbly pressing the dust of ages.

The façade consists of eight Doric columns, raised on three steps, and of a triangular pediment. Nothing could be more simple, and a few lines ruled on a piece of white paper would suffice to give the geometrical appearance; yet the impression it produces is profound, sudden, and irresistible. All the vain dreams one had dreamed vanish like fleeting shadows; the clouds part, and in the golden beam that rays the serene azure sky, the reality appears in its sov'ran power, a thousand times grander than the imagination.

So many sunsets have impregnated with their rosy hues the white columns of Pentelicus marble since the day, two thousand four hundred years ago, when they rose into the blue Athenian sky at the call of Pericles, that the stone, enriched by successive layers of glow, has acquired extraordinarily vigorous and powerful reddish, orange, and sienna tones. It looks as if it had been candied by that rich, ardent light, which does

not afflict ruins with the leprosy of moss and the stains of unhealthy vegetation. The marble has with time become golden, like silver that is gilt.

The dazzlingly white façade which one has built up in one's imagination, forgetful of the ages that have elapsed, melts like a snowflake under a burning sunbeam, and glorious colour is found where one had thought of beauteous form only. A few crude scars, a few garish blemishes due to shells and cannon-balls, alone impair the warm harmony, and if Spanish gongorism were admissible in presence of this noble Athenian severity, it might be said that the white lips of the divine temple's wounds silently protest against man's bestial barbarity.

The eight columns, fluted in straight, chaste folds, like those of the tunic of Pallas Athene, the goddess with the bluish-green eyes, spring at once and without a pedestal from the marble step that serves them for a base, to the harmoniously swelling curves of their capitals, diminishing with infinite delicacy of gradation, and, like all the perpendicular lines in the building, leaning backwards imperceptibly, inclined as they are by a secret rhythm towards an ideal point placed in the centre of the temple, — Minerva's brain, or the

architect's, mayhap; the radiant thought towards which bend, in a unanimous movement of mystical adoration, unnoted by the ordinary eye, the outward forms of the temple.

In spite of their oddity, I can find no better word to express the ineffable beauty of these columns than to say that they are human. The glowing marble seems to be skin browned by the sun, and they look like a company of youthful canephoræ bearing the mystic van upon their heads. It was when the sacred processions were passing along the road to Eleusis that Ictinus and Callicrates, their minds filled with the loveliness of the forms they beheld, drew the pure profiles of these columns. We, who know only the icily mathematical straight line, which, as a matter of fact, is only the shortest way from one point to another, as it is employed by our pseudo-classical architects, have no conception of the extreme sweetness, of the infinite suavity, of the tender and penetrating grace of which a straight line, thus treated, is susceptible. The Chamber of Deputies and the Church of the Madeleine, which we fondly fancy are like the Parthenon, are but coarse imitations, like those effected by children with wooden blocks, ready

cut, in the architectural playthings that are given them on New Year's Day.

Unfortunately the tympanum of the pediment is damaged, but time is not to be blamed for this. A drawing made in 1600 represents the masterpiece of Greek sculpture as almost intact at that time. It had traversed the ages and escaped the barbarians; it had but to make three hundred-year strides more to reach us in its glorious integrity. The Gauls under Brennus, the Burgundians under Walter de Brienne, the Florentines under Acciajuoli, the Turks under Othman, had not touched its hard marble skin. Scarcely had a few of the cannon-balls fired by Morosini the Peloponnesian scored white ricochets upon the divine sculptures. It was a civilised being, Lord Elgin, who caused to be torn from the pediment the figures of Phidias which had been spared by the shells. He did it with Vandal-like brutality, and as awkwardly as a drunken porter, drawing down on himself the avenging epigram which Byron, the noble poet, engraved upon the top of the profaned monument, at the risk of breaking his neck: *Quod non fecerunt Gothi, hoc fecerunt Scoti*, — in imitation of a similar play upon words directed against the Barberini in Rome, who built themselves a palace out

of three of the arches of the Coliseum: *Quod non fecerunt Barbari, hoc fecerunt Barberini.* It is true that the wonderful figures which were thus stolen are now in the British Museum, where they may be admired by the visitor on his way back from the Tower and Barclay and Perkins's brewery, but the noble marbles, used to the warm air of Attica, must shiver indeed in the London fog, and pine for the rosy beams of the setting sun that seemed to send the purple of life coursing through their Pentelicus veins.

At each angle of the pediment there remains one figure, the torso of a man and the body of a woman, fragments of the mutilated poem. These two bodies of broken statues are headless, and they are damaged and mutilated, but their imperishable beauty has survived innumerable outrages, and makes itself felt through two or three lines so exquisite as to drive to despair every modern sculptor. These isolated and broken figures seem to be mourning over their absent companions, and to be chanting upon the ruins the dirge of the deserted.

A frieze comprising fourteen metopes, divided by fifteen triglyphs, rests upon the eight Doric columns I have been speaking of. Each metope contains a

carved subject almost undecipherable now, unfortunately for art, on account of the breaking off of the projections, the obliteration of the hollows, and the scaling away of the marble due to the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Time, which occasionally improves a rough piece of sculpture with its intelligent touch, has borne too hardly on these fine reliefs. The frieze runs round the four sides of the temple, but it can be made out plainly on the anterior and posterior faces only.

A second row of columns, also Doric, stands in front of the pronaos and bears a frieze laden with sculptures, a procession of figures travelling from right to left: men, women, horses, and horsemen performing a carved Panathenea, with free, life-like, easy arrangement, grouping, attitudes of bodies, and flow of draperies, that in no wise breaks the lines of the architecture and loses none of its hieratic gravity. Preserved by the outer frieze, these *bassi-relievi* have suffered much less than the others, and I am indebted to the barbarity of the Turks, the ancient profaners of the Parthenon, for the means of inspecting them more closely.

Between the second row of columns and the right angle of the naos wall, rises a heavy mass of masonry

of bricks and mud, in which the first two columns of the row are engaged. It is the shell of an old ruined minaret, the stair of which is entered from the interior of the temple. The stair itself is broken in many places; the steps are gone, and the slope alone is left. By keeping to the spiral the level of the frieze is reached, and it may be seen close if one ventures upon the marble blocks that crown the building. It is then possible to note the beauty of the work more in detail, but one must not get lost in artistic ecstasy or step back incautiously, as the consequence would be a fifty-foot drop and a smash of every bone upon the sacred ground.

The walls of the naos, which still stand in part, though there are large breaches where the stones have fallen away, are easily made out, the architecture being so simple, clear, and logical that the broken lines are prolonged of themselves. The walls consist of large rectangular blocks of Pentelicus marble, joined with such care and accuracy that the columns which remain standing appear to be monoliths. The distinctive feature of Greek architecture of the best period is the extreme carefulness and marvellous finish of the workmanship; the round blocks for the columns were

ground round and round on each other, like mill-stones, in order to make them fit perfectly, and then an olive-wood clamp fastened them together. A number of these clamps have been found in the ruins and preserved. Neither explosions, earthquakes, lightning bolts, nor bombardments have been able to disunite these marbles, which are set one within the other as accurately as English hinges.

In the interior are to be seen the faint traces of Byzantine paintings, for before being turned into a mosque, the Parthenon had been a Christian church. About the centre of the nave, I noticed on the pavement a square mark of a different colour; this was the spot where rose the ivory and gold statue of Pallas Athene, Phidias's masterpiece, in her severe and virginal beauty, protectress and sponsor of the city.

By the way, talking of Phidias, scholars affirm that this statue was the only work of his in the Parthenon; according to them, the *bassi-relievi* on the metopes must be attributed to other sculptors, for the author of the Minerva and of the Olympian Jove worked in ivory only, and never used marble. I am not sufficiently versed in these matters to say how much weight ought to be given to this statement, but I own that it would

grieve me to have to dissociate the name of Phidias and the Parthenon frieze.

Round the place where presumably stood the pedestal of the statue, are seen, among a number of scattered blocks, the shafts of small columns which formed the interior order of the temple. It would seem to be most probable that this order comprised two rows of superimposed Ionic pillars, but there is nothing left of it nowadays.

The Opisthodomos, or Treasury, occupies the back of the nave, and was probably semicircular, but the real outline is hard to make out under the mass of débris and of pieces of broken columns. The roof is gone, and the temple of Pallas has no other covering than the blue Athenian sky. Of the fifteen columns that run along the longer sides of the parallelogram formed by the temple, there are six broken at different heights on the sea side, and nine on the land side, so that the air shows in blue cuts in the outline of the Parthenon when it is seen from a distance. These breaks, regrettable from an artistic point of view, are less so from the picturesque, for they give air to the ruin and make it lighter.

The warm orange colour that gilds the principal

façade has not spread to the other parts of the temple, the marble there having preserved its pristine whiteness, or at least being of a relatively lighter tone. The contrast, which might be startling, does not strike one at first, being toned down by the perspective; the southern pediment is golden, and the northern snow-white.

On the triple steps that form the base of the temple are lying pieces of the frieze, portions of the courses of the walls, and broken pillars, among which, so dry is the climate and so burning hot the temperature, no weeds have grown. One would in vain look there for the nettles, hemlock, mallows, asphodel, ivy, ferns, saxifrage, and wall plants that cast a mantle of verdure over old stones in our moist climate; the temple, with its scattered blocks of stone, so crude of tone and so sharp on the edges, looks more like a building in process of erection than like a ruined monument. Botanists, however, have discovered a small local plant which grows on the Acropolis only, and the name of which escapes me. I should have dearly liked to bring back a specimen of it carefully put away in vellum, but it is in the spring only that it blooms, and four months of sunshine had calcined the bare rock, which is more arid than pumice-stone even.

II

THE TEMPLE OF THE WINGLESS VICTORY

On ascending the slope, with its broken, disjointed steps, which leads from the gate discovered by Beulé to the façade of the Propylæa, and on reaching, amid excavations, rubbish mixed with human bones and skulls, and blocks of marble, a point about midway up, there is seen on the left the pedestal of the statue of Agrippa, with the Temple of the Wingless Victory on the right. The rock face, covered with retaining walls, forms a terrace, the two wings of which frame in the steps.

Before this entrance was cleared (which was not the case on the occasion of my visit to Athens), the Acropolis was reached by a small side path that passed in front of the platform of the Temple of Nike Apteros, and was quite unworthy of Mnesicles' majestic porch. Yet, in spite of every presumption to the contrary, when the ground was inspected and architectural logic was taken into account, it was believed that this indirect and out of the way road had always been the means whereby access was had to the Athenian citadel. The point now is whether the stairway that exists at present is the original one.

Scholars are of opinion that the steps which still exist were reconstructed in the course of a restoration by the Romans in the second or third century, the marble of the Greek steps having been worn down by the feet of fifteen or twenty generations. That is a question I shall not attempt to solve, for my business is that of a mere tourist, though I think it is likely the scholars are right.

In the face of the substructure opposite the Pnyx are two recesses separated by a pilaster; in the belief of the Turks this was the opening, filled with sand and walled up, of two subterranean passages which led to the upper platform; they are merely two niches scarcely deep enough to hold a statue, though some have affirmed they were cryptic sanctuaries of Mother Earth and Demeter Chloe; but a curious scene in Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" disposes of this suggestion.

A series of antique steps, recently replaced, and running up the terrace wall, which is about twenty-four feet high, leads to the Temple of Victory, situated somewhat in front of the Venetian tower which spoils the right wing of the Propylæa.

The small size of the temple surprises one, but it is no less elegant because small; the Greeks knew how

to impart the idea of grandeur by the eurhythmy of lines, without needing to resort to enormous masses; and this monument, which might be loaded bodily upon a railway truck, does not look in the least crushed by the formidable propinquity of the Propylæa and the Parthenon.

The miniature temple is built throughout of Pentelicus marble; the lovely material, of so soft a tone and so perfect a grain, heightens the perfection of the form. It seems to have been created purposely to furnish immortal flesh for gods and columns for temples.

The building consists of a cella raised upon three steps, and of two tetrastyle porticoes, of the Ionic order, the one on the façade and the other at the opposite end.

The façade, which is rather irregularly orientated, faces obliquely the tower I have mentioned, so that as one ascends the slope, the posterior portico is first seen diagonally, which is contrary to our modern notions of absolute symmetry, — a point on which the ancients laid little stress, as may be seen by the fact that their monuments are placed picturesquely rather than geometrically. It may also be that the necessity of concentrating a large number of buildings within a naturally

restricted sacred space compelled them to be somewhat lax in the matter of regularity.

The columns of the portico, the shafts of which are in one piece, twelve feet high, are striated with flutings crumpled and crinkled by time like the folds of a fine tunic upon the body of a lovely woman. They look like drapery negligently cast by Phidias upon the hip of a statue. Clever breaks and appropriate erosions have broken the straight lines and the clean edges, and imparted to the marble, of a golden transparency, the appearance of soft byssus cloth.

Ovid, in his "Metamorphoses," tells a good many stories of nymphs transformed into trees and still breathing under the warm bark. These columns, so life-like in their gracefulness, make one think of maidens whose white bodies and white draperies have been caught within the slender blocks. The capitals themselves prolong the illusion, for the rounded volutes recall the tresses of hair twisted on the temples, and the ornamentation the rich gems in the hair.

As one looks upon these lovely columns, the idea suggests itself that perchance ruin adds more to buildings than it takes from them. It may be that the lines which have been softened by time did not at first

possess such exquisite *morbidezza*, and incomparable suavity; when they were brand-new, they must have exhibited an architectural regularity that could not have produced so favourable an effect. Besides, this sort of softening of reliefs suits the Ionic order particularly well, for, if it be permitted to assign a sex to columns, it looks, by the side of the virile Doric, like a beautifully adorned woman by the side of an austere and robust young man. The small size of the temple justified the use of a more delicate style, and the somewhat slender elegance of the shafts is explained by the slightness of the burden they had to carry, a burden greatly diminished now, for the pediment has vanished and the frieze alone is left.

Two rather slender pillars, which, besides, are masked by the columns, form the entrance to the cella. There are still visible holes cut in the stones which show that the sanctuary was formerly closed by a grating, through which the faithful could look upon the statue of the goddess placed at the back; for the whole of the interior is no larger than an ordinary room.

The statue was of wood, like almost all archaic figures. It was venerated on account of its great age, and the very fact that it was of barbaric form inspired

a superstitious respect that would not have been felt for more beautiful and more skilful modern work; just as, among us, there are certain Black Madonnas on gilt backgrounds that are far more highly honoured by the vulgar than the most exquisite Virgins of Raphael.

The statue was not that of the Wingless Victory, but that of Victorious Minerva, or, more literally, Minerva Victory (Athena Nike). Victory, a purely allegorical being, had no temple among the Greeks. The ancients placed it, in the shape of a small winged figure, in the hand of the gods, as an attribute of omnipotence. The Minerva of the Parthenon bore in her ivory palm a golden Victory, which she held in or released as she pleased, as a falconer recalls or lets fly the falcon. No doubt, when the meaning of the pagan myths began to be forgotten, the wingless statue excited surprise, and the ingenious explanation was lighted upon of Nike Apteros being unable to fly away from the rock of the Acropolis and being permanently settled in the temple. It is said that there was in Sparta a chained figure of Mars that expressed the same idea by means of an analogous symbol.

The roof of the building has fallen in, but that of the portico still stands, and it is yet possible to make

out the traces of the metal roses within the compartments. Round the temple runs a frieze of *bassi-relievi*, the figures in which, not through the attacks of time, which is far less destructive than is generally believed, but through man's brutality, have lost heads or arms or legs.

What a singular instinct of imbecile perversity it is which has led every nation that has appeared in succession upon the soil of Athens, and which has mingled its bones with the splinters from the broken marble, to mutilate the monuments, to scar the bodies of heroes and goddesses, and to dishonour the wondrous masterpieces of antiquity! It is impossible to refrain from feeling madly angry, and to include in one general anathema Romans, Byzantines, Frenchmen, Italians, Turks, and modern Greeks, — for one and all have wrought havoc, have profaned and outraged, — when it is so plainly seen, by the perfect preservation of the remains spared by cannon-balls, shells, and explosions, by pick-axes and hammers, that all these marvels would have come down intact to our own times but for the vandalism of both victors and vanquished; for upon the surface of the hard, polished marble of Pentelicus, the years have streamed like mere drops of water.

On account of their smaller proportions and of the comparatively low height at which they are placed, the sculptures on the Temple of the Wingless Victory must have greatly suffered. What has survived, however, is so beautiful as to make one regret most keenly what has vanished. The frieze on two of the faces, the north and the west, was removed by Lord Elgin, and is now in London. It was replaced by terra-cotta casts, one of which broke as it was being put up, and it was found that the pieces were used for the construction of part of a Turkish powder-magazine.

The sagacity of scholars and antiquarians has long been taxed, and is even now taxed, to divine the meaning of the subject of the eastern frieze, that which is on the façade of the temple. The most ingenious, but at the same time the most unsatisfying and unconvincing hypotheses have been put forward; the mutilated marble keeps its secret and reveals its beauty alone. Nor does art ask more, for what matters it whether it be an apotheosis or a judgment, an unknown myth or an historical event?

In the centre of the composition stands a female figure armed with a shield, her gesture indicating that she formerly held a lance. On her right and on her

left, seated, the one upon a rock, the other upon a throne, are two figures in the attitude attributed to divinities, and on either hand there is a symmetrical group of men and women. Outside this central composition there is going on an unintelligible action, a mysterious drama that has given rise to innumerable conjectures. At one of the ends of the bas-relief, a draped and seated figure seems to be contending with two women; at the other end, three women seem to be hastening up, while two others appear to be restraining a small winged, nude genie or Cupid.

Such is the general arrangement that can be made out through the cracks, the worn portions, and all the outrages that so many centuries of barbarism have inflicted upon a delicate masterpiece within the reach of the maces of the soldiery and the stones of the small boy, that everlasting destroyer. The figures in the centre and at the ends are very badly damaged, but those in the other groups have, as a rule, lost their heads and parts of their arms only; the torsos are entire, and there are but few breaks in the folds of the marble draperies. It is possible even yet to admire the free, proud flow of these draperies, and the harmonious way in which they cling undulatingly to the bodies,

more like an atmosphere than like vestments. The figures have the balanced and rhythmical attitudes, and the slightly bent limbs and prominent hips the ancients were so fond of, and that were, in a way, the music of human form. Immortal beauty shines through the stupid mutilations, and artist souls still own the sway of the crippled gods and headless heroes.

The other sides, more or less deteriorated, are filled with bands of warriors, and represent an idealised battle, the name and date of which it is impossible to fix definitively. The names of all the Greek victories rise to the lips, but not one of them settles upon the frieze, folds its golden wings, and marks with its finger the desired title. History bites its nails, but art smiles as it looks at the battle so well begun, at the beautiful groups so full of life, at the whole composition which is so thoroughly sculptural. It is quite certain that the enemy are Medes or Persians, for they are recognisable by their chlamys, their pleated trews, their almost feminine head-dress, so that at first they were taken for Amazons. The Greek warriors are quite nude, save that on their shoulders flutter light mantles, and there is nothing about them to mark a particular epoch. It would be less difficult to settle the sculptural date of

the friezes, for the style seems to indicate the period that elapsed between the times of Phidias and of Lysippus. Art has reached the highest point of perfection, but is not yet falling into decadence, though it becomes more refined through the necessity of doing something new and avoiding famous commonplaces. This is, perhaps, for refined minds, the most exquisite moment in the ages of greatness: Beauty is conscious of its existence; it is deliberately brought about instead of being spontaneous, and when the attempt is successful, when the supreme end is attained, no human effort can go farther.

It would appear, from recent discoveries, that the edge of the terrace towards the steps was adorned with a balustrade of marble slabs ornamented with *bassi-relievi* and surmounted with a railing. A number of the slabs have been placed within the cella, where they may be admired. One of them represents a woman endeavouring to hold back a bull which one of her companions is walking in front of or running away from, and another the winged figure known as the Sandalled Victory. There is nothing more perfect in Greek art than this youthful body, which the transparent drapery caresses as loving lips might do. It

ceases to be marble; it is woven air, a weft of wind that plays about the entrancing form with chaste yet warm voluptuousness. The action of the arm that unfastens the sandal strap is wonderfully easy and natural; the other hand lightly grasps the falling drapery, and the fluttering wings partly upbear the bending body like the wings of a bird that has just alighted. From what golden or azure heaven came down this ideal creation, incarnated in the pure marble, the whiteness of which time has respected? May not this anonymous Victory be Phidias' Muse poising itself on the Acropolis for the last time ere it wings its flight to vanish for ever?

III

THE ERECHTHEIUM, THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA POLIAS, THE PANDROSEIUM

THE plateau of the Acropolis formed a perfect museum. Upon that narrow plot of ground encumbered with temples, statues, and altars, pagan art had delighted in heaping up marvels, and had made of all these monuments one temple, as it were, — one single oblation. It would take a more erudite person than I am to restore and reconstitute all these buildings, for

in many cases all that is left of them is a fragment of a frieze, a portion of the shaft of a column, a mutilated capital, sometimes less, not more than two or three courses of stone, or a groove in the rock, indicative of former foundations.

To make one's way intelligently through this quarry of accumulated débris, the triple erudition of M. Beulé, the historian of the Acropolis, Hellenist, antiquarian and architect, would be none too great. His book fills me with a curious regret; it is that the author should not have enjoyed a previous life in which he might have written the "Voyage in Greece," in the stead of that rapid and negligent tourist, Pausanias. How many uncertain points would be cleared up, and how many secrets deciphered! Antiquity, endowed in the highest degree with the artistic sense, had not the gift of description and criticism; and it is a very great pity, for there are so many vanished masterpieces that would now live in trustworthy pages. Admirable is the sagacity with which Beulé has discovered the sites of the Temples of Diana Brauronia and Athena Ergane. He turns the smallest indication to account, interprets a difficult text without forcing the meaning, questions every stone, reads a date in the way a course is clamped,

in the more or less archaic form of a character, in the depth of a fluting, in a scoring of the rock. He collects these scattered bits of information logically, and while they would tell nothing to less attentive and less learned eyes, he unites them into a mass of convincing proofs. Bit by bit the building rises up and resumes its place in the assembly of wondrous monuments which formed the sacred crown of that sublime plateau; the statues that have vanished or that have been smashed to pieces by cannon-balls, shells, and explosions, reascend their pedestals and there is formed anew, as by the touch of a wizard's wand, the long line of masterpieces past which the visitor walked from the five gates of the Propylæa to the three steps of the Parthenon: the Propylæan Mercury; Socrates' three Draped Graces, —for he was a sculptor ere he became a philosopher; the bronze Lioness erected in honour of Leæna the courtesan, who had faithfully kept the secret of Harmodius and Aristogiton; the Venus offered by Callias, the work of Calamis; the bronze statue by Cresilas, of Dutrephes, the Athenian general who fell in battle, pierced with arrows; the Hygeia, the Minerva Hygeia, a votive offering by Pericles on recovery from sickness, a bronze figure larger than life, the work of

Pyrrhus the sculptor, the imprint of the feet being still visible upon the pedestal, yet in existence; the stone whereon Silenus sat down; the Alcibius Citharadus of Nesiotes, the rival of Phidias; the Child bearing a vase of lustral water, and the Perseus holding the head of Medusa, the one by Lucius, the son of Myron, the other by Myron himself; the Trojan Horse, an equestrian colossus, a bronze imitation of the famous wooden horse, from the side of which issued Menestheus, Teucer, and the two sons of Theseus; the gigantic ram, the butt of the comic poet's jokes; Epicharinus victorious in the Hoplites race, by Critios and Nesiotes; Hermoycus the pancratiast; Phormio, the general, who, before starting on a campaign, made the Athenians pay his debts, — all have been replaced in their proper positions with wonderful intelligence and almost unquestionable probability, partly by making use of the rather obscure account given by Pausanias, partly in accordance with inductions drawn from the aspect of the place.

It is worth watching Beulé moving the blocks of stone, turning them over, studying every side of them, and forcing them to reveal the ancient inscription, which is often next the ground. The statues were

carried away, those at least which were not of a religious character, for the purpose of adorning Nero's Golden House, or else there are but scattered parts of them buried in the débris. The pedestals, however, being heavy and of little interest at that time, were left undisturbed, and they it is which have been examined by Beulé with almost invariable success. By this means he has even been able to correct mistakes in spelling made by Pliny. At the time of the Roman rule, Greek servility utilised the greater number of these pedestals, shorn of the statues they had borne, by placing on them the figures of proconsuls or obscure administrators, simply reversing the marble blocks which had supported the vanished masterpieces, and it is thanks to this practice that so many valuable bits of information, unknown until the present day, have been recovered.

It is upon these pedestals that the young and learned archæologist read the names of Strongylion, Sthenis, and Leochares, the sculptor of Thundering Jove, of the Crowned Apollo, and of Ganymede, the sculptor who wrought the friezes of the tomb of Mausoleus with Briaxys and Scopas. Strange is the mingling on one and the same block of marble of the names of an

Athenian family and of Cæsar Augustus, Germanicus, Trajan, and Hadrian!

I shall not follow Beulé farther in his learned investigations which have enabled him to restore the vanished nation of statues and to people with a swarm of bronze and marble figures the desolate loneliness of the Acropolis, which antiquity had transformed into a sort of little Dunkirk of masterpieces. I should have to quote constantly from his work in order to tell where it was that stood the group of Minerva striking Marsyas, the Fight of Theseus, the statue of Flavius Conon, the helmeted man with the silver nails, the work of Cleotas, Earth beseeching Jupiter Fluvius, whose altar was on the summit of Hymettus, — for to the visitor's eye there is naught visible but a chaotic mass of overthrown blocks of stone, and it takes an antiquary's patience to recognise the mutilated and worn portions in the museum of fragments, a sort of Hospital of the Invalids of sculpture, which is situated under the portico of the Pinacothek.

On the left of the Parthenon, on issuing from the Propylæa, are seen the ruins of three temples, placed one against another without any care for symmetry, and each in a different style of architecture. They are

those of Minerva Polias, Erechtheium, and of Pandrosos, called also the Pandroseium. This curious arrangement is a further proof of the fact that the ancients did not lay as much stress upon absolute regularity as we moderns are apt to think, and indeed that they avoided it in order to please the eye by the non-continuity of lines. They appear to have been acquainted with the laws of intersequence, and in this respect they often bear out the ingenious views put forward by Ziegler in his investigation into ceramics and the principles of ornament. It may be that in the case in point the peculiar placing of the buildings was due to local superstitions which forbade the adoption of any other plan.

Within the Erechtheium was the salt spring which Neptune caused to well up from the ground at the time of his dispute with Minerva concerning the patronage of Athens. Earthquakes and landslips have dried up the spring itself, but there are still visible on the rock-face, through the disjointed flagstones, three marks not unlike the deep scores that would be made by a violent blow with a gigantic trident. In all ages superstition has delighted in interpreting such natural peculiarities as traces of the passage of the gods, and even now in the Pyrenees one is shown the cut made by Roland's

sword, and in the island of Serendib the print of Adam's foot.

The Temple of Athena Polias (that is, Protectress of the City) had its portico upon the side of the Erechtheium, against which it was placed, so that it could be entered as through a side door. The Pandroseium, which could only be entered through the Temple of Minerva, formed a sort of parallelogram with this portico, the geometrical outline of the plan being not unlike the letter T. Like the Temple of Athena Polias, the Erechtheium was Ionic, while the Pandroseium belonged to no known order of architecture, and is the one and only example of that sort of construction known.

I have endeavoured to give an idea of this agglomeration of sanctuaries so strangely placed by each other and assembled under the influence of religious ideas. Erechtheus had a very complicated genealogy, which it would be difficult to explain without giving offence. Vulcan, enamoured of Minerva, attacked her so fiercely that if Earth had not generously substituted herself for the goddess pursued by the lame blacksmith, the bluish-green-eyed deity would have run the risk of seeing her reputation for virginity greatly compromised. Erechtheus, the offspring of this disappointed lust, passed at

first for being the son of Vulcan and the Earth, then, later, of the Earth alone, whence his appellation of Autochthone. Minerva, however, moved by pity, put the child in a basket and brought it up in secret, fearing the gibes of the gods and the Olympic laughter of which the divine blind man speaks. And then, in a way, she was somewhat his mother. In Minerva's sanctuary dwelt the three daughters of Cecrops, Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos. One day the goddess, having observed that her beloved city was not properly defended on the west, ingeniously bethought herself of fetching a mountain from Pellene, and warned the three sisters not to look into the basket. Pandrosos alone obeyed her injunctions, Aglauros and Herse were less discreet, and the chattering basket flew off to tell the tale to Minerva, who was returning with her mountain under her arm, and let it fall in her surprise and confusion at finding that her secret was discovered. The mountain is Lycabetus, which may be seen, at the very place where it was dropped, raising into the blue heavens its summit gilded by the sun, and bearing an hermitage. Pandrosos became all the dearer to the goddess; the other two sisters threw themselves down from the top of the Acropolis. Erechtheus dethroned Pandion, King of

Athens, instituted the Panathenaic festival, raised temples in honour of Minerva, whom he might well look upon, if not as his mother, at least as having been the cause of his coming into the world, and he was buried under the sacred soil of the Acropolis.

Thus around the Temple of Athena Polias were grouped, if one may use such an expression in connection with pagan divinities, the chapels of her adopted son Erechtheus and of Pandrosos, her trusty confidant.

The Greeks in the Middle Ages turned the Erechtheium into a church; under the Turkish rule, the Dislar Aga used it for his harem. These beautiful buildings were spared no outrages, until the happier days when the fragments overthrown by the cannon-balls were put back in their places and the outward appearance of the fanes was nearly restored. It is impossible to give any idea of the perfection and the finish which the Greeks lavished upon their monuments; the jambs of the gate of the Temple of Athena Polias, which still exist, some in their proper place, some fallen to the ground, where they may be examined more closely, are adorned with a fillet of pearls alternating with olives, wrought out with the most incredible delicacy, and by the side of which the finest gems seem coarse. Never

did Cleopatra wear upon her regal arms a bracelet of rounder, more polished, more beautifully strung gems than these marble pearls which, to me, are as good as those of Ophir, and which the ages seem to have taken pleasure in rendering more lustrous.

Close by these fragments of antiquity a piece of marble, wrought out with the praiseworthy object of serving in the restoration of one of the parts, showed how vastly different modern work is from ancient work, and this although the copy was mathematically correct.

It was in this temple that used to burn, under a bronze palm tree, the golden lamp chased by Callimachus, the inventor of the Corinthian capital, and that a modest myrtle veiled the obscenity of a Hermes who, incongruously enough, was lodged in the home of the virgin goddess.

The Pandroseium contained the olive tree brought forth from the ground by Minerva during her dispute with Neptune, and under the foliage of the sacred tree, emblematic of the source of Attica's wealth, rose the altar of Jupiter Herceus.

The entablature of the Pandroseium does not rest upon columns, like the friezes of the other temples in its vicinity, but upon caryatids, living pillars, whose

rich and powerful forms support unyieldingly the weight of the architrave.

A capital adorned with ova and strings of pearls, by way of an architectural head-dress, rests on their heads, rich in thick curls and plaited tresses, and admirably manages the transition between nature and the building. The idea no doubt occurred to the artist when he saw the young girls returning from drawing water at the fountain of Callirhoe with their urns balanced on their heads. The arms are cut off, like those of the Venus of Milo, but intentionally, for the projection of the arms would have disturbed the monumental aspect of the figures. The draperies fall in broad, symmetrical folds, like the flutings of a pillar, and are nearly similar in each case. One of the caryatids was carried off by Lord Elgin and has been replaced by a copy.

The Pandroseium is one of the most lovely fancies produced by Greek art, so noble that it seldom indulged itself in this way and merely renewed consecrated forms by the ideal perfection of the details.

It was between this trio of temples that rose to its full height the colossal statue of Athena Promachus, armed with shield and lance, and wearing her helmet, the aigrette of which was visible at sea from Cape

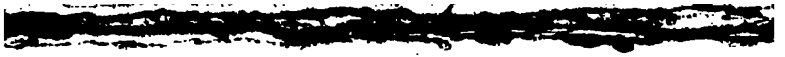
Sunium, as if to terrify the foes of Athens. But nowadays all one sees within the bay of the Piræus are the rent outlines of the Parthenon and the Gothic tower which spoils the right wing of the Propylæa.

Pallas Athene no longer keeps watch and ward over her city.

Pallas Athene-no longer keeps watch and ward over her city.

The Magic Hat

The Magic Hat



THE MAGIC HAT

BASTONADE in ONE ACT

and in VERSE and ONE COUPLET with the COLLABORATION of M. PAUL SIRAUDIN

First performed at the *Théâtre des Variétés*, April 7, 1845, and revived at the *Théâtre de l'Odéon*, November 30, 1872.

CHARACTERS

GÉRONTE	CHAMPAGNE
VALÈRE	INEZ
FRONTIN	MARINETTE

The scene is in front of Géronte's house, in a public square.

SCENE I

FRONTIN, MARINETTE

FRONTIN *enters.* (*Aside*). — What! Marinette here!

MARINETTE (*also aside*). — Frontin! Who would have thought it!

FRONTIN (*aside*). — The wretch!

MARINETTE (*aside*). — The rascal!

FRONTIN (*aside*). — I shall have to show myself. She has seen me. (*Aloud.*) Good morning, Marinette.

MARINETTE. — Good morning, Frontin. So my good friend is back?

FRONTIN. — I got back yesterday only. I was in the country, on my estate.

MARINETTE. — Why, I thought you were in the penitentiary.

FRONTIN. — You flatter me. But I seem to have heard that for lack of a château where you might the summer spend, you six months did while away — nay, do not blush for it; such a thing may happen to the best, — within the Reformatory.

MARINETTE. — Whence I issued the very same day when, through some misunderstanding, no doubt, that uncle of yours on the public square was hanged.

FRONTIN. — Alas, yes! In company with your sire. He was a worthy man. Heaven envied earth for having him, and so the air had to be put between them. Ha! ha! ha!

MARINETTE. — Let us drop dangerous subjects. What is the use of recalling such trifles? Everybody is apt to be unfortunate, and if perchance among our

relatives we count some of those great minds which are not understood or appreciated by narrow-minded judges, is that a reason for publicly proclaiming it? No; that is not the way between friends.

FRONTIN. — You are right. Let us the subject change. What are you doing now?

MARINETTE. — Nothing contrary to virtue.

FRONTIN. — Don't you believe it.

MARINETTE. — I am merely advising a young lady oppressed by a grievous guardian.

FRONTIN. — Where did you get a character?

MARINETTE. — You insolent fellow!

FRONTIN. — Come, do not get mad. I was only joking. I have the highest regard for you.

MARINETTE. — Be done with your chaff. What is your lordship doing at present?

FRONTIN. — I am in the service of a gentleman in love, confound him. I get very little profit and plenty of hard work. I have to turn my hand to anything. Ah! if only fate had caused me to be born master instead of servant, I swear I should not have taken him for my valet. It is not easy to be a valet. It is a hard trade; we are expected to be patterns of every virtue; many a hero would prove but a poor servant. Masters! I

should like to know what they would do without us, the brutes.

MARINETTE. — That is all very fine, but suppose some one were to tell your master what you say?

FRONTIN. — He would only laugh. He likes me; I have vices.

MARINETTE. — Which are of great service to his.

FRONTIN. — I own it. I am clever, but he is in love, and these two faults each other console.

MARINETTE. — That is the way with me; for of what use could I be to my timid maid were I too simple-minded?

FRONTIN. — You can be trusted to do your duty, Marinette. And by the way, I should like to know what is the motive that leads you, at this unseasonable hour, to roam around this place.

MARINETTE. — Like yourself, Frontin, I am in a position to commit an indiscretion. I commit it. Why do you, dear rascal, prowl round here, your cap over your eyes, and your cloak on your shoulder?

FRONTIN. — You answer my question, and I'll answer yours.

MARINETTE. — You know that you can get nothing from me for the asking. I am a woman of principles.

FRONTIN. — 'T was not ever thus —

MARINETTE. — You conceited fellow.

FRONTIN. — You have a short memory.

MARINETTE. — And you are rude.

FRONTIN. — You are hard upon me.

MARINETTE. — You are indiscreet.

FRONTIN. — And you inquisitive.

MARINETTE. — Sh! some one comes.

FRONTIN. — Why, 't is Champagne, Géronte's valet. What a fool he looks.

MARINETTE. — And ugly!

SCENE II

THE SAME, CHAMPAGNE

FRONTIN. — Hallo! Champagne.

CHAMPAGNE. — Hallo! Frontin.

FRONTIN. — How is Mr. Géronte?

CHAMPAGNE. — In the best of health, and unless some one knocks him on the head, he will never die.

MARINETTE. — He is still quite a lusty man.

CHAMPAGNE. — A little dusty.

MARINETTE. — Well preserved.

CHAMPAGNE. — Full of preserves.

MARINETTE. — Very lively.

CHAMPAGNE. — Yes, when he has his stick and no gout.

MARINETTE. — I stick to what I say; he is more to my taste than many a young fellow who puts on side.

FRONTIN. — What is that worthy master of yours about now?

CHAMPAGNE. — Putting under bars, bolts, locks, and safe ward a very pretty girl; a youthful angel with bright, penetrating eyes, — Miss Inez, of whom he is so jealous that, in spite of his closefistedness, he is becoming prodigal for her sake.

FRONTIN. — Nonsense.

CHAMPAGNE. — In the way of iron-work.

MARINETTE. — A prudent man and a guardian wise.

FRONTIN. — And is he successful?

CHAMPAGNE. — Not particularly. He is not cut out to bewitch girls. He is, to win so fair a maid, too old, too ugly, too much of an ass, and, above all, too much of a miser.

FRONTIN. — Heaven evidently did not create him with a view to his being loved.

CHAMPAGNE. — No one has ever loved Mr. Géronte.

FRONTIN. — Not even his wife?

CHAMPAGNE. — His wife? Not much.

FRONTIN. — At that rate, then —

CHAMPAGNE. — Mr. Géronte was, I can assure you —

FRONTIN. — What in polite language is called "deceived."

CHAMPAGNE. — He was; I used to carry the notes to the lady. She is dead; God rest her soul. Ah! those were fine times! I had drinks galore, and out of the fees earned by carrying the missives I saved a handsome pile, which is in the hands of Mr. Géronte, my master, who, as he desires to retain it, keeps me too perhaps, for he is naturally much disinclined to return money, though he is quick enough to take it. For the rest, he feeds me worse than a sporting dog; deducts from my wages the cost of the sticks he breaks on my back, and dresses me in such rags that at sight of me the crows take to flight. Curse my luck! I was born under a most niggardly star.

FRONTIN. — If you choose to serve me, I shall make you a rich —

MARINETTE. — And I shall love you.

CHAMPAGNE. — No, thank you. I am a virtuous

chap and will have nothing to do with crooked ways; for, did he happen to hear of it, Mr. Géronte is just the man to kick me out and keep my cash.

FRONTIN. — So you refuse?

CHAMPAGNE. —Yes, I say no.

FRONTIN (*thrashing him*). — You rascal, you! you lout! you dunderhead! How do you like being licked? Here 's at you!

CHAMPAGNE. — Help! Help! Murder! Help! Marinette is pinching and Frontin killing me!

FRONTIN. — Fall in with my plans, and before your dazzled sight shall sudden shine a roll of gold.

CHAMPAGNE. — Pass it over.

FRONTIN. — Serve me first.

CHAMPAGNE. — What do you take me for?

FRONTIN. — You scoundrel! You mean to be honest and to your master true. Here you are, then!

(*He thrashes him again.*)

SCENE III

THE SAME, GÉRONTE

GÉRONTE. — What 's that? What are you thrashing Champagne for?

FRONTIN. — He deserves all he gets, and I only wish I had laid on harder.

GÉRONTE. — What has he done?

FRONTIN. — Done? Nothing; that is just the point. An idle servant is undeserving of respect, for, after all, it is quite plain that he is not engaged merely to spit into a well and to cross his arms.

GÉRONTE. — My man idle? Ah! the wretch! You swindle me.

CHAMPAGNE. — Sir, I have finished my work.

GÉRONTE. — Do it over again, then.

FRONTIN. — Instead of staying at home, he drinks at a tavern until he loses his senses.

MARINETTE. — See for yourself, sir. The liquor blazes in his face, and the wine on his nose in red has written: Drunkard.

CHAMPAGNE. — If I am drunk, so are the fishes in the river.

GÉRONTE. — Is it to fill yourself up with liquor that I engaged you, you guzzler?

CHAMPAGNE. — I am still fasting.

FRONTIN (*shoving him*). — The ground, giving way under him, makes him think he is on board a skiff in a storm.

MARINETTE (*pushing him*). — He certainly could not dance on a tight-rope.

FRONTIN (*again pushing him*). — Shall I fetch you a wall to lean up against?

CHAMPAGNE. — Stop shoving me!

GÉRONTE. — You sot! You loathsome beast!

MARINETTE. — And while he staggers round in that beastly state, it would be the easiest thing in the world for some gay young spark, light swallow of love, a balcony skimming as day declines, to make his way to your ward's room.

GÉRONTE. — Heaven! What do I hear? My ward! My treasure! Lovers, robbers! I shall go crazy. I dismiss you, you scoundrel!

CHAMPAGNE. — Sir, I repeat that —

GÉRONTE. — Not another word, or I 'll brain you.

CHAMPAGNE. — At least give me my money back.

GÉRONTE. — You have no witnesses. So your money I keep to pay for the cost of keeping it. Away with you, you wretch!

(*They all hustle Champagne out.*)

CHAMPAGNE (*running away*). — Help! Help! Police!

SCENE IV

GÉRONTE, FRONTIN, MARINETTE

GÉRONTE. — Well, I am rid of that thorough-paced rascal! He may protest as much as he pleases; I will give him nothing back, for how could he, even if thrifty, save such a sum when I pay him nothing?

FRONTIN. — He must have robbed you.

MARINETTE. — It is plain as a pike-staff.

FRONTIN. — The fellow's money is yours. A less indulgent master would send him to sea to write with a fifteen foot pen, and wearing, for fear of colds, a superb cap of the most brilliant red.

MARINETTE. — To go and deceive you! It is a shame, when you are so kind and trustful.

GÉRONTE. — I am sufficiently avenged since I have not to return the money, and I would just as lief he went and got hanged elsewhere.

FRONTIN. — That's right, but there you are without a valet now.

GÉRONTE. — Without a valet, as you truly say. What rank ill-fortune it is for a man like me to have no valet! It is positively shameful.

FRONTIN. — You cannot certainly, sir, with your own august hands, ink the seams of your breeches and beat your own garments in sight of all the neighbours.

GÉRONTE. — No, of course; they would jeer and laugh at me.

MARINETTE. — And who is to grease, at night, your curls all limp?

GÉRONTE. — In what an abyss of woe I have fallen, O Heaven!

MARINETTE. — And who is to come and light your fire at morn?

GÉRONTE. — I am done. Sadness oppresses me. Ah! Champagne, my good, my faithful Champagne, I miss you terribly.

FRONTIN. — He was a fool.

MARINETTE. — A drunkard.

FRONTIN. — A thief.

GÉRONTE. — All that I grant, yet if he stole, I was the receiver, and henceforth it is in other hands that he will put the fruits of his — savings.

FRONTIN. — It is most sad, but since you have kicked him out, think no more of the matter.

GÉRONTE. — But who is to take his place? Ah, woe is me!

FRONTIN. — I shall.

MARINETTE. — I shall.

GÉRONTE. — It is difficult to make a choice between you two, Frontin and Marinette.

FRONTIN. — Sir, I am honest, active, intelligent; I eat but little, and drink even less.

MARINETTE. — And I, for my master, sir, am full of attentions. I warm his bed and his slippers too; I hold his candle for him, I —

FRONTIN. — You are out of breath, my dear. Let me put in a word. If I offer to serve you, sir, it is out of sheer disinterestedness. I ask nothing of you, or but very little, say twenty crowns.

GÉRONTE. — The fellow pleads his cause very well. I engage you.

MARINETTE. — Fifteen crowns and the honour of being your maid will be sufficient reward for my pains. It is for glory I serve.

GÉRONTE. — I' faith, she is alluring; I like her pretty mouth and sparkling eye. I engage you.

FRONTIN. — Ten crowns, sir, will be enough for me.

GÉRONTE. — Then I take you.

MARINETTE. — Not so fast, sir. I care for the

master more than for the pay; so give me five crowns and I am at your service.

GÉRONTE. — It is settled, then, Marinette.

FRONTIN. — Hold on, please. I will serve for nothing at all.

GÉRONTE. — In that case you're the man for me.

MARINETTE. — I have a better offer to make. You shall receive pay instead of me, and I will give you a hundred pistoles a year.

GÉRONTE. — That is a much better plan. Come along, Marinette.

FRONTIN. — I am willing to give two hundred.

MARINETTE. — And I three hundred.

FRONTIN. — I add the pickings.

MARINETTE. — And I the cast-off clothes.

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — So much zeal makes me suspect something. What can be the object of such persistency?

MARINETTE. — Don't load yourself with such a ne'er-do-weel.

FRONTIN. — My feelings compel me to warn you —

MARINETTE. — That if you engage him you will acquire in him a rich collection of dissolute ways.

FRONTIN. — She has every possible vice, and a few more besides.

GÉRONTE. — The truth is she does look like a real bad one.

FRONTIN. — That is the only true thing about her.

MARINETTE. — All very fine, but pray look at him, with his bird-of-prey eyes and his dark complexion; he is a regular cut-throat; it shows all over him.

GÉRONTE. — Marinette and Frontin, I believe you both, and I entirely share the opinion you have of each other. I hesitate to choose between you; so, all things duly weighed and considered, I still prefer Champagne, and I am off to look for him in the low pot-house to which he generally resorts.

(*He goes out.*)

SCENE V

FRONTIN, MARINETTE

FRONTIN. — The devil is in it! The old goose has flown, regularly scared away.

MARINETTE. — Tell me, Frontin, was I such a fool?

FRONTIN. — Was I tongue-tied, Marinette?

MARINETTE. — I should have seen what you were driving at.

FRONTIN. — We have hurt each other for want of coming to an understanding.

MARINETTE. — I undid your work.

FRONTIN. — And I spoiled your job.

MARINETTE. — We ought to have backed each other up.

FRONTIN. — The trouble is too many rascals spoil the broth.

MARINETTE. — And a dupe is always warned by one or the other.

FRONTIN. — Let us play fair and openly, and talk without guile. You were working a love intrigue?

MARINETTE. — I was, like yourself.

FRONTIN. — You were for the girl?

MARINETTE. — Yes; and you for the lover?

FRONTIN. — Exactly.

MARINETTE. — The coincidence is singular.

FRONTIN. — You were for Inez?

MARINETTE. — And you for Valère?

FRONTIN. — Enough said; let us kiss, join forces, and work together.

SCENE VI

THE SAME, VALÈRE

FRONTIN. — But stay, I see my new master, Mr. Valère, approaching.

MARINETTE. — He has everything that can help him with the girls; he is handsome, young, —

FRONTIN. — Everything, in a word, save the one essential quality — money. (*To Valère.*) Have you brought any cash?

VALÈRE. — Not a red.

FRONTIN. — By the powers! Then what is the use of having a fool of an uncle?

VALÈRE. — Speak more respectfully of Géronte.

FRONTIN. — What touching scruples, to be sure. A hateful uncle who lets the Jews look after you, and resolutely refuses to die.

VALÈRE. — He has disinherited me.

FRONTIN. — That is another story; in that case let him live.

VALÈRE. — What have you done for your part?

FRONTIN. — I have thought out a very subtle trick, which cannot fail to succeed.

VALÈRE. — Let me hear it.

FRONTIN. — Not if I know it. I am dumb. Secrecy means much in such stratagems, and the success of my plan alone shall reveal it to you.

SCENE VII

THE SAME, INEZ *on the Balcony*

MARINETTE. — Pray, sir, in this direction cast a glance. It is Inez appearing.

VALÈRE. — I behold the heavens open.

FRONTIN. — The heavens indeed! A sash with bottle-green panes.

VALÈRE. — Dawn shines forth, smiling and rosy —

FRONTIN. — Dawn has come out on the balcony this morning, eh?

VALÈRE. — And makes the rose pale by comparison with itself.

FRONTIN. — I beg pardon, sir, but your style is too metaphorical. You are wasting your time in flowers of rhetoric; now, opportunity is a woman, and will not wait. Marinette, you keep watch yonder, and I at the foot of this wall will give you, sir, a lift to help you to rise to the level of your fair.

VALÈRE. — How can I ever repay —

FRONTIN. — Do that by and by, when you are in funds.

VALÈRE. — Frontin, you are my saviour.

FRONTIN. — Come, lose no time; up with you. One, two —

VALÈRE. — And up!

(*He climbs on Frontin's back.*)

FRONTIN. — Hang on to the railing.

VALÈRE (*to Inez*). — To rise to your level, Inez, one would need to be a king's or a hero's son.

FRONTIN. — All you need is Frontin to give you a back.

VALÈRE. — I feel I am naught and in poverty plunged; I have nothing, I am well aware, that can attract you. But your eyes, at once adorable and murderous, pierce with their glance the stoutest shields. Take not offence at the sighs breathed by poor wretches which these glances chance to strike. Be not angered by my audacious hopes, and deign to accept a heart which is wholly yours.

INEZ. — It is easy to pardon when the offence is so sweet.

VALÈRE. — Be sure my love — Hang it! What a start! I very nearly fell.

FRONTIN. — Sir, you are heavy as lead. Finish up, and for heaven's sake do not be too long.

INEZ. — Valère, I believe your words. I love you, Valère, and I do confess it all too soon, but the constraint in which I live excuses an avowal, which others, less carefully watched, would have delayed longer. It is to such extremities that jealous gray-beards force young maids they keep imprisoned.

VALÈRE. — Your frankness, Inez, increases my respect.

MARINETTE. — Look out for yourselves! A suspicious monster is e'en now showing in the distance.

FRONTIN. — Quick! Let Inez bend down, and do you rise and kiss the tips of her fair fingers.

MARINETTE. — It is Géronte.

FRONTIN. — Look alive!

INEZ. — Farewell, Valère, farewell.

FRONTIN. — Now, let the rest of us seek swiftly a change of air and scene.

SCENE VIII

GÉRONTE *alone*

WITHIN what ditch, or against what wall, sleeping off his drink, lies that rascal of mine? O Champagne,

are you dead? Have you for a coffin ta'en a staved-in cask of Brie or Argenteuil? You model of valets, pearl among servants, more virtuous than slaves of antiquity, by heaven brought forth specially for me, how shall I replace you? How without you live?

Why! suppose I tried to serve myself? That would be a way out of the problem. I should order myself about, and myself obey; I should always be at hand when I wanted myself, and I should not have to pull the bell down for me. No one knows better than I do that my morals are perfect and that I have always behaved honourably. So, then, I eagerly engage myself.

Ha! ha! my gay young sparks, if you catch this valet fooling me, you may proclaim it with sound of trump. I shall pocket your gold and hand it over to myself; your scented notes I myself shall read. And to better all, to-morrow, careless of praise or blame, I take Inez, my ward, to wife. She shall nurse me in my coughing spells, and by her side lying I shall laugh at you, poor shivering gallants, seekers of amorous fortune, freezing to death under the balcony in the clear moonlight. And when that precious nephew of mine I espy, with two or three pails of water his ardour I'll cool.

SCENE IX

GÉRONTE, VALÈRE

GÉRONTE. — What! you here again?

VALÈRE. — I confess, uncle, that 't is I.

GÉRONTE. — Your feet will be taking root in the mud. You remain stuck too long in the same spot, and you will be putting out leaves in spring.

VALÈRE. — I came to —

GÉRONTE. — Very good; now be off.

VALÈRE. — I beg of you —

GÉRONTE. — Begging is of no use.

VALÈRE. — Uncle, I must embrace you.

GÉRONTE. —No, thank you; you are too fond of embracing, nephew mine.

VALÈRE. — Uncle, I have a confession to make —

GÉRONTE.— I refuse to listen to any confessions.

VALÈRE. — But uncle —

GÉRONTE. — May I have a boil on the very tip of my nose if I listen ever to aught you say! I have cut you off; what 's more, I curse you!

VALÈRE.— I love —

GÉRONTE. — You indecent youth! A shame on

your crude speech! Your lasciviousness makes my wig blush.

VALÈRE. — I love Inez —

GÉRONTE. — Enough, sir. If ever again I catch you in this place — Do you see my gold-topped cane?

(As VALÈRE *goes out he meets Frontin, with whom he exchanges a knowing look.*)

VALÈRE. — Uncle, you are violent.

GÉRONTE. — Off with you! My hands are trembling with wrath.

VALÈRE. — Keep cool; I'm off. And now hangs my fate upon the success of Frontin's scheme.

SCENE X

GÉRONTE, FRONTIN

FRONTIN (*aside*). — There is no mistake that Géronte is a fierce sort of uncle. So, unnatural old man, since nothing can move you, I shall teach you a lesson, and trick you in rare fashion. (*Aloud as he comes forward.*) Sir, what is the matter? You look put out.

GÉRONTE. — I am choking with anger.

FRONTIN. — For what reason?

GÉRONTE. — What is the reason that causes a quiet-tempered uncle to turn red and blue?

FRONTIN. — A nephew.

GÉRONTE. — Because, forsooth he claims to be my brother's son, that cursed Valère exasperates me beyond control.

FRONTIN. — Happy, thrice happy he that no relations has!

GÉRONTE. — Under Inez' balcony every day I come upon him, working out some plan, some trick devising.

FRONTIN. — Tulips look well in China vases, daisies are seemliest in the meads, violets daintiest in the woods, iris by the waterside, and wallflowers on roofs, but the kind of flower that best under a window grows is a lover. It may be that Inez has noticed him?

GÉRONTE. — Well, and truly shall I hoe and weed the ground. But put on your hat, Frontin; you will catch cold if you remain hatless in the street.

FRONTIN. — If I were to put on my hat I'd disappear from your sight; I'd be eclipsed.

GÉRONTE. — What do you mean?

FRONTIN. — I would vanish in a flash.

GÉRONTE. — What nonsense are you talking?

FRONTIN. — No nonsense at all, but solid truth. Pray look at my hat.

GÉRONTE. — It is fairly napless and of washed out colour.

FRONTIN. — You may add that it is faded, bashed in, filthy, greasy, that time and sunshine have made it bare; I 'll allow it. Yet never on this earth we tread, since those ancient times when men first wore hats, shapeless though it be, bandless and rusty, was there ever one to compare with this.

GÉRONTE. — I have seen hats just as ugly but never any so dirty.

FRONTIN. — Whence comes it, think you?

GÉRONTE. — From the gutter, by its looks.

FRONTIN. — Fie upon you! 'T is the hat of Fortunatus.

GÉRONTE. — That?

FRONTIN. — THAT! It is the hat which makes the wearer invisible. It came into my hands by a series of incredible chances, of events too true not to be improbable.

GÉRONTE. — You mean to tell me that when you have that hat on your head no one can see you?

FRONTIN. — Yes; such is its virtue.

GÉRONTE. — I have trust in you — but find it hard to believe you; prodigies of that sort require full proof.

FRONTIN. — The proof you shall have.

GÉRONTE. — At once?

FRONTIN. — Yes; there, look carefully.

GÉRONTE. — Yes, yes.

FRONTIN (*slipping behind him and hanging on to the tail of his coat*). — The trick works. What do you see now? Anything?

GÉRONTE. — Where has the fellow gone? I cannot make it out.

FRONTIN (*still behind him*). — I have gone nowhere; I am here, in front of you, but invisible.

GÉRONTE. — I am bound to find you.

FRONTIN (*as before*). — Hunt away, Podgers.

GÉRONTE. — There's nothing the matter with my eyesight.

FRONTIN (*as before*). — He 'll never see through it; I 've got him by the tail of his coat. Sir, you are running like a deer; pray spare yourself.

GÉRONTE. — The thing is wonderful indeed! He is there in front of me, speaking to me, and I cannot for the life of me see him. Where are you, Frontin? On my left?

FRONTIN (*as before*). — No, on your right.

GÉRONTE. — This way?

FRONTIN (*as before*). — No, there. Go on, I 'll lock step with you.

GÉRONTE. — Ouf! I am perspiring all over!

FRONTIN. — Are you satisfied? Are you fully convinced?

GÉRONTE. — Quite.

FRONTIN. — Well, then, I reappear.

(*He slips round in front of Géronte.*)

GÉRONTE. — I see you plainly now.

FRONTIN. — Of course you do.

GÉRONTE. — It is amazing! I do not know whether I am asleep or awake. Let me have that hat.

FRONTIN. — I should love to present it to you, sir, but upon my word, I cannot. That hat, you see, is my home, my cellar, my kitchen —

GÉRONTE. — And your stewpan, I dare say. No wonder it is so greasy. Is the soup you make in it good?

FRONTIN. — You do not follow me. When the dinner hour within my stomach sounds, I pull my beaver down over my eyes and make my way into some cook-shop, invisible to all. There, among the chickens, nicely browned, I pick out the best-done one, nobble it, and devour it, my feet on the hearth,

where none disturbs me. Then at the nearest tavern, to wash down the fowl, I drink of the best without paying my shot.

GÉRONTE. — Wonderful!

FRONTIN. — With second-hand-clothes men I deal as with the cook and taverner both. You may ask for my eyes, you may call for my skin, my wife, nay, for my children, but not, not for my hat.

GÉRONTE. — But with that hat on it would be so easy for me to know what Valère and my ward are up to.

FRONTIN. — It is true that to a guardian, in age advanced and very jealous, my hat is worth more than bolts and bars. With such a treasure all tricks are vain. Before the criminal you suddenly arise, terrible, at the crucial moment, heaven knows whence, like a Jack-in-the-box shot up by a spring.

GÉRONTE. — I buy it from you.

FRONTIN. — No, you don't. You are too niggardly. That hat of mine makes me King of France and Navarre, and you would offer me a price most dishonouring.

GÉRONTE. — Will you take a hundred crowns for it?

FRONTIN. — It is n't much, but — well, I 'll take it.

GÉRONTE. — I should like, before handing over the cash, to try —

FRONTIN. — Why, certainly.

GÉRONTE (*aside, as he puts on the hat*). — I 'll make a bolt of it, and get the hat without its costing me a penny. He won't see me.

FRONTIN (*aside*). — I 'm up to your game, you old thief. (*Aloud.*) Ah! sir, it is very wrong to cheat a poor man. I am taken all aback by such conduct; it is atrocious. He cannot have got far off. I 'll hit in every corner in hopes of finding him. I 'll thrash the air black and blue, and I 'm sure to catch him with some of my blows. I 'll hit out at a venture. Here 's a shower for you! Up and down, crossways and sideways, and every way!

GÉRONTE. — Oh! Ah! Oh, my leg! Oh, my arm! Oh, my back! Oh, my shoulder!

FRONTIN. — I 'll lay on so with this wand of mine that I 'll catch him sure. I can't see him, but I hear him yell and groan at every step. (*Aside.*) With a crack of my stick let me break the spell.

(*He knocks off the hat.*)

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — I am black and blue all over.

FRONTIN. — There, I lay aside my arm. I was really worried by your eclipsing yourself. I looked for you everywhere. I hope I did not hit you?

GÉRONTE. — No.

FRONTIN. — I am afraid I may have raised a lump on you.

GÉRONTE. — I am tough. (*Aside.*) I'll pay a man to thrash you, you brute.

FRONTIN (*offering him the hat*). — Now let us close the bargain. We can both trust each other; you let go the purse, I'll let go the hat.

GÉRONTE (*handing him a purse*). — There you are.

FRONTIN. — You happy mortal; now the world's yours, all but this purse. (*He slips the purse into his pocket.*) You are like the air, you can go in and out wherever you please; a mere man, you know as much as the gods; nothing can be hid from you; in every mind you may read, and, what none has yet done, you may know women. Here is Marinette coming in the very nick of time. Vanish, and I shall confess her before you.

(*Géronte puts on the hat.*)

SCENE XI

THE SAME, MARINETTE

FRONTIN. — What is the matter, my dear?

MARINETTE (*pretending not to see Géronte*). — Nothing.

FRONTIN. — That 's not true. Your face, usually wreathed in brilliant smiles, is gloomy as a funeral, and you look as if you had just lost your lover.

MARINETTE (*as before*). — You cannot lose what you have not got. I am a good girl, and will not be courted save by those willing to wed, Frontin.

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — Who 'd have suspected her of such virtue?

FRONTIN. — Then why do you look so sad and cast down?

MARINETTE (*as before*). — For a very different reason. I too soon allowed myself to fancy that I might be lucky enough to please dear Mr. Géronte, and be engaged by him as maid of all work. Well, you know how things fell out, and that is why I am so sad.

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — I am sorry now I did not engage her.

MARINETTE (*as before*). — Now he has no one. Who dresses and curls his hair? Who is there to tie his cravat and find his gloves? I should have taken all these cares upon myself and looked after him as a dutiful girl looks after her father.

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — What I failed to do, I can yet do.

MARINETTE. — He is such a gentle, polite, attractive man.

FRONTIN. — I am not quite of your way of thinking; he is an aged —

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — What?

FRONTIN. — Ugly, stupid, —

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — You scoundrel!

FRONTIN. — Sour-tempered —

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — Villain!

FRONTIN. — Filthy old beast.

GÉRONTE (*aside to Frontin*). — I 'll break every bone in your body, if —

FRONTIN (*aside to Géronte*). — I 'm saying all that to try her, sir; keep perfectly quiet. (*To Marinette*). So you think well of him?

MARINETTE. — I do; there is something about him so open and frank that delights and enchants me. Oh! how glad I should have been to serve him!

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — The kind-hearted lass! I feel my eyes moisten and my emotion causes a tickling in my nose.

(*He sneezes.*)

MARINETTE. — I hear some one sneeze, but I can see no one.

GÉRONTE. — It is I who —

MARINETTE. — What is that voice I hear? Is it a ghost? a phantom?

GÉRONTE. — Why, no, it is I.

MARINETTE. — Who? you?

GÉRONTE. — Géronte.

MARINETTE. — But where is your body?

FRONTIN (*taking off Géronte's hat*). — I beg your pardon, sir, but you forget that in order to be seen you must take off your hat.

MARINETTE. — Oh! what a dreadful fright you have given me, sir.

GÉRONTE. — Be reassured. I shall dispel your fears with a word. You see this hat? Well, all I have to do in order to vanish or reappear is to put it on or off.

MARINETTE (*aside*). — Let me affect timidity and pretend to be embarrassed.

GÉRONTE. — The situation you desire, my girl, shall be yours.

MARINETTE. — You were there all the time, sir? You heard me? I feel so ashamed, so put out. Oh! I do not know which way to look.

GÉRONTE. — It was thus I learned how devoted you are to me.

FRONTIN. — While we are about it, suppose we try another experiment with the talisman to ascertain what Inez thinks about you?

GÉRONTE. — What would be the good of that, Frontin. I know she does not love me.

FRONTIN. — I say she does love you. Hearts are closed books that must be opened if you would read in them.

MARINETTE. — Do you expect a girl to blurt straight out to you that she is in love with you?

GÉRONTE. — But she has refused my hand a score of times.

FRONTIN. — And you pay attention to such trifles? The real meaning of a young girl's "no" is "yes."

MARINETTE. — Sir, I agree with Frontin. Miss Inez loves you, that 's certain.

GÉRONTE. — Here are my keys, Marinette. Go into my house and induce my ward to come out.

SCENE XII

GÉRONTE, FRONTIN

FRONTIN. — Thanks to your hat, you will proudly as a conqueror read your name in that dear girl's heart.

GÉRONTE. — I dread reading Valère's in letters large.

FRONTIN. — Girls do not care for such feeble fops as he. But here they come. On with your hat.

SCENE XIII

THE SAME, INEZ, MARINETTE

MARINETTE (*to Inez*). — Let us take a turn or two. The weather is so fine.

INEZ. — Willingly; I go out so little.

MARINETTE. — Valère may be round somewhere.

INEZ. — If Valère really sought to please me, he would cease importuning me. There are plenty other women who might care for him.

MARINETTE. — You surprise me, Miss, for I had till now thought you had a tender spot in your heart for him.

INEZ. — I did accept his attentions with apparent favour, for why should a girl bridle up and get angry because a young and gallant fellow, of attractive mien, does his best to be agreeable?

GÉRONTE (*aside*). — True.

FRONTIN (*aside*). — Do not shout so loud, sir.

INEZ. — I rather liked him.

GÉRONTE (*to Frontin*). — Support me, I am dead!

INEZ. — But ere long I saw that his attentions were but false seeming and mere hypocrisy.

GÉRONTE. (*aside*). — I breathe again.

INEZ. — I perceived, when I got to know him better, that it was my money he was after.

FRONTIN (*aside to Géronte*). — What did I tell you?

MARINETTE. — Shame upon the fortune-hunter.

INEZ. — And to another love my thoughts have turned. A man —

FRONTIN (*to Géronte*). — Now listen.

GÉRONTE. — I am listening.

INEZ. — Of mature age —

FRONTIN. — That 's you.

GÉRONTE. — Hold your tongue.

INEZ. — Loves me for myself alone.

MARINETTE. — His name?

INEZ. — I dare not —

GÉRONTE. — I am blushing all over.

MARINETTE. — Come!

GÉRONTE. — I tremble.

INEZ. — It is — Géronte.

GÉRONTE. — I am in the seventh heaven!

FRONTIN. — Is that plain? Now do you think my hat dear at one hundred crowns?

GÉRONTE. — Frontin, my truest, my only friend!

FRONTIN (*aside*). — I shall go tell my master it is time he appeared to play his part.

INEZ. — Géronte, my guardian, soon my husband to be, who alone now reigns in my enlightened heart.

GÉRONTE. — You dear little ducky, you.

MARINETTE. — One thing is sure, and that is no man knows how to love before he is threescore. Where could he learn to love? At school?

GÉRONTE. — Well put, my lass. But stay; who comes? It is Valère, the rascal!

FRONTIN. — Keep cool.

GÉRONTE. — But he is going to talk to my ward!

FRONTIN. — Well, what of that?

GÉRONTE. — What? What of that? You will make me mad.

FRONTIN. — You talk like a guardian when you are the lover. The parts are changed.

SCENE XIV

THE SAME, VALÈRE

INEZ. — Valère, here, at this time?

VALÈRE (*Pretending, throughout the whole scene, that he does not see Géronte*). — Be not afraid; I am no longer the same, and I do not come, Inez, to tell you of my love. My heart has got rid of such frivolity.

INEZ. — Your speech, sir, delights me.

VALÈRE. — I do not mean to strive against an uncle so adorable.

INEZ. — Adored!

FRONTIN (*to Géronte*). — You see.

VALÈRE. — Much to be preferred to his nephew —

GÉRONTE. — That is true.

VALÈRE. — Who has nothing but his youth —

MARINETTE. — A merit that decreases as time rolls on.

GÉRONTE (*to Frontin*). — A girl of sense, that.

FRONTIN (*to Géronte*). — Let us keep up the test.

VALÈRE. — You are going to wed Géronte!

INEZ. — I am.

VALÈRE. — I am acquainted with a widow whose charms of two houses and a hundred thousand francs consist. Who to such attractions could indifferent be?

INEZ. — A very good match; I advise you to marry her.

GÉRONTE. — The world's coming to an end; my nephew is getting sensible.

VALÈRE. — The match will make me rich, and I mean to turn it to account in order to settle, like a dutiful nephew, my uncle's guardianship accounts without checking them.

GÉRONTE. — That is noble of him.

INEZ. — Can a woman make over her wealth to the husband of her choice?

VALÈRE. — Assuredly.

INEZ. — Then I give to Géronte all I have.

GÉRONTE. — What a fine deed!

FRONTIN. — Mighty fine!

INEZ. — My two farms in Brie, my real estate, both woodland and meadow, my stocks, my house on the bridge Saint-Michel, my clothes, my jewels —

GÉRONTE. — Go on, angel of heaven!

INEZ. — To Géronte I mean to give.

VALÈRE. — I quite approve your purpose.

GÉRONTE. — You dear lad.

INEZ. — If my guardian thinks me worthy of being his wife, once I have my goods on him bestowed, my happiness will be complete.

GÉRONTE. — What nobleness of mind!

INEZ. — And I shall be quite sure that, as I shall then be poor, he marries me for love.

GÉRONTE. — Don't be afraid; I'll marry you fast enough.

FRONTIN. — You will find it hard to make up to her for such devotion.

INEZ. — Shall I have to sign a deed?

VALÈRE. — In order that the gift may be in due form, it is necessary to have a deed drawn up, and Marinette and Frontin shall now accompany us to the lawyer's, as witnesses, where you shall sign.

GÉRONTE. — Better send for the lawyer.

FRONTIN. — Not much; deeds are not signed in a public square.

GÉRONTE. — They are in plays.

FRONTIN. — That may be; but this is no play.

(*They go out.*)

SCENE XV

GÉRONTE, *then* CHAMPAGNE

GÉRONTE. — Frontin was right; 't is I she loves. The uncle wins over the nephew; Géronte beats Valère! They bestow their wealth on me! Thanks to this old hat, I see the world in a new light.

CHAMPAGNE (*drunk, enters singing*).

When under the vine
With a bottle of wine,
Red or white, as the case may be,
I sit at the table,
I never am able —
For a reason sound, as you see —
To tell if it 's sundown
Or morn's pallid gown
That makes it the colour it be!

GÉRONTE (*putting on his hat*). — He is drunk as a thrush at vintage time. Very much drunk.

CHAMPAGNE. — Good morning, sir.

GÉRONTE. — What? Good morning? That is strange. You see me then, fellow?

CHAMPAGNE. — Rather think I do.

GÉRONTE. — Yet I have my hat on.

CHAMPAGNE. — I ought to see you twice over, rather than once only, for I have had a drink, and every man of us when tipsy sees double; that 's a well-known fact.

GÉRONTE. — His words make me anxious.

CHAMPAGNE. — God created but one sun; wine makes two.

GÉRONTE. — I should have been more distrustful of them. You cannot see me, for I am invisible, in virtue of my magic hat.

CHAMPAGNE. — That may be, but this is your back? (*He slaps him on the back.*) Did you feel that?

GÉRONTE. — I should think I did.

CHAMPAGNE. — Here 's that big paunch of yours —

GÉRONTE. — Oh!

CHAMPAGNE. — Was I out?

GÉRONTE. — No.

CHAMPAGNE. — It is n't your head I have kicked, is it?

GÉRONTE. — No! No! Great Heavens! what a fool I 've been! I am tricked, robbed, duped like a babe.

CHAMPAGNE (*aside*). — What is he uttering such elephant sighs for?

GÉRONTE. — I have been robbed of a hundred crowns! I have been robbed of my ward! Murder! Fire!

SCENE XVI

THE SAME, FRONTIN

FRONTIN. — What is the use of making such a row? Neither your money nor your ward is lost. Hallo! There 's Champagne. By the way, with a drunken man you need two hats; I ought to have told you. He saw you, I dare say.

GÉRONTE. — May heaven fall on you and crush you! You swindler, you galley slave, you forger, you poisoner!

FRONTIN. — Quite a number of titles, sir; you honour me. There, look, Inez is returning with Valère and Marinette.

SCENE XVII

THE SAME, VALÈRE, MARINETTE

GÉRONTE. — Where do you come from?

MARINETTE. — From a very respectable place.

VALÈRE. — We have had a deed in due form drawn up by the notary.

GÉRONTE. — I see, the deed of gift.

VALÈRE. — No, a contract of marriage.

GÉRONTE. — What?

VALÈRE. — A contract of marriage between this lady and myself.

GÉRONTE. — I am bursting with rage.

VALÈRE. — We came to the conclusion that love and hymen may get along hand in hand.

GÉRONTE. — It was I she loved.

MARINETTE. — Frailty, thy name is woman.

FRONTIN. — Your part now to bless the pair.

GÉRONTE. — I 'll thrash you if you indulge in more sarcasm.

MARINETTE. — Valère is so nice!

GÉRONTE. — You vixen! You strumpet!

CHAMPAGNE. — Take me back, sir.

GÉRONTE. — What does the drunken brute want? A slap? I have plenty and to spare. (*He slaps his face.*)

CHAMPAGNE. — I want my situation or my money.

GÉRONTE. — I took you in naked as a Child Saint John, and paid you very irregularly very small wages. How did you get that money? By what crimes?

CHAMPAGNE. — Sir, I earned it in the days when you were — deceived.

GÉRONTE. — All right; I take you back.

CHAMPAGNE. — Oh! if only Madam had lived longer!

GÉRONTE. — Silence!

MARINETTE. — Do not be a hard-hearted uncle, and forgive this pretty pair with a good grace.

GÉRONTE. — Never.

INEZ. — Dear guardian, we shall love you so.

GÉRONTE. — I won't.

FRONTIN. — Forgive the means for the sake of the end.

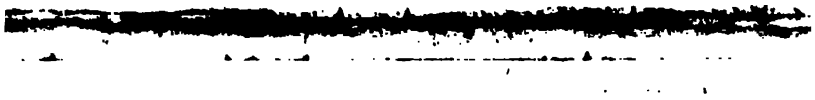
VALÈRE. — Uncle!

GÉRONTE. — Nephew mine, you are a scamp; but I am a Géronte, and play my part — I must. I forgive you all.

ALL. — Thank you.

FRONTIN. — (*To the public*). — Now it is your turn to play your part; forgive us; be our uncle for one day, and to this trifle your applause grant, for in all climes and all times it favour has won. It is the uncle and the man, the ward and her lover dear, the tale that ever

brings laughter forth. Birds are we of plumage bright and chatter gay, but different from birds in cage. Authors for us in prose and verse do write, but without being whistled to we learn our tunes. Although we have not taken Molière's name, pray do not treat us too cavalierly; you know us, we old friends are, and you may applaud us without fear.



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